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Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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Annual session of 2018
19 and 20 June 2018
Item 1 of the provisional agenda
Organisational matters

Report on the election of the Bureau, 12 January, and on the first regular session, 13 February 2018

I. Election of the Bureau

1. On 12 January 2018, the Executive Board elected four out of five members of the Bureau of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for 2018. The Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Montenegro to the United Nations, H.E. Ms. Ivana Pajević, was elected as President of the Executive Board for the year 2018. The Vice-Presidents were elected from the following regional groups: (a) African Group: Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zambia to the United Nations, Ms. Christine Kalamwina; (b) Asia-Pacific Group: Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Sangwook Kang; (c) Latin American and Caribbean Group: Attaché at the Permanent Mission of Panama to the United Nations, Ms. Desirée Cedeño.

2. The Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, Mr. Saud Alshamsi, congratulated the incoming President and thanked the Executive Board on behalf of the outgoing President H.E. Ms. Lana Zaki Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates).

II. Organisational matters

3. The first regular session of 2018 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) was held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York on 13 February 2018.

4. The Executive Board elected the fifth Vice-President, Mr. Jyrki Terva, Minister Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations, for the Western European and Others Group. Mr. Joo Il Lee, Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations, was elected to replace Mr. Sangwook Kang.

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5. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan of the first regular session of 2018 (UNW/2018/L.1) and adopted the report on the second regular session of 2017, held on 29 to 30 August 2017 (UNW/2017/11). The Executive Board approved the provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2018, to be held on 19 and 20 June 2018 (see Annex I) and adopted the annual workplan 2018 (see Annex II).

6. One Member State asked the Secretariat if an opportunity to further dialogue on the internalisation of the audit function and its link with independent evaluation within UN-Women would be on the agenda of the annual session of 2018, or if supplemental information would be included in the UN-Women audit report to be presented at the annual session.

7. Two Member States, referring to the Report on cost recovery in Item 3 on Financial, budgetary and administrative matters in the provisional agenda and workplan of the annual session of 2018, reminded the Secretariat of paragraph 11 of Decision 2017/2, requesting UN-Women to present evidence-based proposals for its harmonised cost-recovery policies for consideration by the Executive Board "no later" than the annual session of 2018.

8. The Secretariat confirmed that there will be an opportunity to engage in further discussion on the internalisation of the audit function.

9. The Secretariat assured Member States that UN-Women is working closely with sister agencies to meet the requests of the Executive Board to provide evidence-based proposals in the cost-recovery report presented at the Annual Session 2018.

III. Opening statements

10. In her opening statement, the President of the Executive Board Ambassador Ivana Pajević expressed gratitude for her election, noting that the opportunity represents an honour for her country and herself. The President also congratulated the Vice-Presidents on their respective elections.

11. The President reminded Member States that societies are stronger when women and girls' rights are respected and when they are empowered to take leading roles in communities. She added that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are indispensable for the eradication of extreme poverty, the promotion of sustainable development, and generating success across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

12. The President asserted that increasing the political participation of women, combating violence against women, and the economic empowerment of women are the focus of the Montenegrin government's national policy on gender equality. The President added that her country has made significant progress on gender equality since 2007, creating a functioning legal and institutional framework based on European standards.

13. Looking ahead, the President outlined several events of interest to the Executive Board taking place in 2018. Throughout the year, UN-Women will present on its work at the country level in Haiti, Tanzania and Iraq, which will provide an opportunity for Member States to inquire about the operational response of the Entity. The President noted the upcoming joint field visit of the Executive Boards, as well as the UN-Women specific field visit, highlighting her own positive experiences during the Nepal and India visits last year.

14. In closing, the President underscored her commitment to making the 2018 UN-Women Executive Board even more engaging, collaborative and effective, and

assured that she will work in close cooperation with the Boards of sister agencies in line with the Secretary-General's reforms of the UN development system.

15. In her opening remarks, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, congratulated President Pajević for assuming her new role at the helm of UN-Women's Executive Board, underscoring her positive contribution as Vice-President to the Executive Board in 2017. She highlighted that Ambassador Pajević's Presidency reflects Montenegro's commitment to gender equality. She congratulated the Vice-Presidents on their recent elections. Finally, she thanked Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh for her leadership as President of the Executive Board in 2017.

16. Referring to the Secretary-General's repositioning of the UN development system, the head of the Entity highlighted the success in achieving full gender parity among the 44 members of the UN Senior Management group. Underlining that this achievement was reached in one year, she affirmed that positive change can be made in a narrow timeframe when adopting a top-down approach.

17. Welcoming the common chapter of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, the head of the Entity informed the Executive Board that UN-Women, in collaboration with sister agencies, is implementing the commitments outlined in the chapter in two ways: firstly, by drafting clear, flexible guidance to country offices for using existing mechanisms, processes and programmatic activities to drive collaboration while avoiding duplication; and secondly, by examining ways of increasing development impact through greater collaborative advantage, making full use of existing collective programmatic footprint, expertise, operational assets, and complementary mandates.

18. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director then addressed the subject of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021. She informed the Executive Board that planning systems have been adapted to ensure that all UN-Women offices are aligned with the Strategic Plan, and that the Entity has conducted an annual work planning exercise to examine the first year of implementation in practical detail. She also noted that UN-Women has acted to plan and measure performance against the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 by setting up an online scorecard to enhance transparency and communicating results, validating data in the result framework, and instituting mechanisms to ensure that programming is focused on leaving no one behind in both policy and programmatic work.

19. The head of the Entity informed the Executive Board that UN-Women has put into action the Executive Board's decision in August 2017 to create an oversight office in the consolidation of internal audit and evaluation functions, and has assured Member States that the evaluation function continues to be independent in both organisational and functional aspects.

20. She announced that UN-Women's total revenue, from both core and non-core resources, has reached $355 million in 2017. She noted, however, that UN-Women is still experiencing a shortfall of $115 million against the projected $470 million in the integrated budget.

21. The head of the Entity announced that UN-Women would launch a new global report on 14 February 2018, "Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", to track progress towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

22. The head of Entity paid tribute to Ms. Lakshmi Puri, the former Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN-Women who left the agency in December 2017. In this regard, she added that recruitment for the new Assistant Secretary-General was underway.

23. Turning to the agenda for the first regular session of 2018, the head of the Entity highlighted the important role of innovation for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. She noted that UN-Women is implementing proofs of concept using blockchain technology to provide women with access to finance, markets, and innovation, as well as using mobile technology to provide women and girls with access to education and the means to prevent violence. She added that in February 2018, UN-Women held its first Blockchain Live Simulation event, where member states, the UN, civil society and private sector partners reviewed seven blockchain solutions for women in humanitarian contexts.

24. The head of the Entity highlighted UN-Women's efforts to strengthen collaboration and partnerships with sister agencies, the private sector and civil society. These efforts included joint town hall meetings and joint statements with UNDP, UNFPA and UNESCO, as well as chairing joint programmes for collaborative effectiveness, such as the partnership with UNAIDS.

25. She welcomed region-wide initiatives on ending violence against women and girls, like the European Union's "Spotlight" initiative, where UN-Women will host the secretariat on its behalf. In addition, she announced that UN-Women will be implementing a joint programme with the ILO in the ASEAN region for action against trafficking in persons, including for the purpose of sexual and labour exploitation. She thanked Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Argentina and Mexico for their collaboration in action against femicide in the Latin American region.

26. In closing, the head of the Entity called for UN-Women and the Executive Board to connect with the "MeToo" and "Time's Up" movements to provide solidarity and ensure relevance as power structures and inequalities that allowed many people to sexually harass and intimidate women and girls with impunity are being universally challenged. She acknowledged that the UN, like other institutions with strong power dynamics and hierarchical structures, is vulnerable to situations of sexual harassment and violence. She highlighted the Secretary-General's "zero tolerance" plan for action, and called for Member States and UN-Women to take it into consideration moving forward. Finally, she urged men in the UN system to take part in changing the organisational culture that enables harassment and impunity.

IV. Briefings

A. Briefing on UN-Women's follow-up to recommendations of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board

27. The UN-Women Policy Adviser on HIV/AIDS presented on UN-Women's follow-up to recommendations of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board. Following a short video presentation, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director offered introductory remarks highlighting UN-Women's role in combating HIV and AIDS among women and girls.

28. In her remarks, the head of the Entity stressed that eliminating gender inequality and supporting women's empowerment are critical prerequisites to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic. As an example, she cited a UNAIDS study which showed that one of the main epidemic drivers for girls aged between 15 and 19 years is older adult men who are infecting those lacking the power to negotiate safer sex or refuse sex. She added that, as a result, young women account for 74% of new infections in Eastern Africa and 91% of new infections in Southern Africa. She argued that such a link demonstrates that combating HIV/AIDS is strongly tied to gender inequality.

29. The head of the Entity underscored UN-Women's strong history of partnership with UNAIDS, noting that UN-Women joined UNAIDS as a cosponsoring organisation in 2012. She added that she was pleased to chair the UNAIDS Committee of Cosponsoring Organisations (CCO) in 2017, and to have been a member of the Global Review Panel that UNAIDS has requested to establish. Finally, she was pleased to have been requested to co-lead, with the Executive Director of UNAIDS, the development of a global compact on ending all forms of stigma and discrimination.

30. UN-Women's Policy Adviser on HIV/AIDS highlighted critical data on the gender dimensions of HIV. In 2016, 52% of people living with HIV were women. Globally, in 2016, women constituted nearly half of all new HIV infections. Furthermore, in Sub-Saharan Africa, adolescent girls and young women make up 67% of new infections.

31. The presentation then addressed UN-Women's role in its partnership with UNAIDS. The Entity is primarily focused on ensuring that gender equality influences governance in the HIV response. In this regard, UN-Women supported the successful integration of gender equality issues and HIV strategies in 21 countries, including strengthening the capacities of national HIV/AIDS coordinating authorities.

32. UN-Women works on enhancing the leadership and participation of women and girls in decision-making roles in the HIV response, particularly by building the institutional capacities of networks of women living with HIV. This has strengthened the HIV response in over 39 countries. UN-Women has undertaken a global review to uncover key barriers to women's access to HIV treatment. This review has highlighted several existing issues, such as the scarcity of existing data on women's experiences with HIV treatment and violence against women acting as a major barrier to women seeking care and treatment.

33. The presentation also provided an update on the implementation of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board decisions. Due to reduced resources for the joint programme at the 39th meeting of the UNAIDS Board, UNAIDS and the CCO created a global review panel and developed an action plan which provided a new allocation model — this model would provide a minimum allocation of $2 million per year to all cosponsors at the global level, with the remaining $22 million decided at the country level. These country envelopes ensured that programme support is tailored to meet individual country needs. UN-Women received the smallest allocation, which meant that the Entity had to decrease its presence in certain countries, as well as reduce the number of supported networks of women living with HIV.

34. In terms of UN-Women's contributions to the implementation of the decisions, the Entity successfully advocated for the use of gender markers to determine country allocations in addressing social and structural drivers of the HIV epidemic, including gender norms. UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021 includes key indicators focusing on gender equality and national action plans for HIV.

35. Numerous delegations took the floor in response to the briefing and the opening remarks made by the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director and the President of the Executive Board. Speakers congratulated the President and Vice-Presidents for their election and expressed their support for their work throughout the year. Member States expressed their gratitude towards the commitment and work of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, pledged their support for UN-Women in the implementation of the new Strategic Plan 2018–2021, and reaffirmed the importance of close collaboration between UN-Women and the Executive Board. One delegation expressed their appreciation towards the strong contribution made by the Assistant-Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director Lakshmi Puri during her tenure.

36. UN-Women was encouraged to implement the Strategic Plan effectively and make gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls a reality, particularly at the country level. Effort must be made in all sectors to seize the momentum in achieving the ambitious targets of the Strategic Plan. In addition, it was noted that UN-Women normative and coordination roles, in accordance with its triple mandate, need to be safeguarded. Changing discriminatory norms and legislation plays a crucial role in making a difference. Two speakers underlined the importance of including women and girls with disabilities in the work.

37. In the context of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, Member States marked the Common Chapter as a basis to define priorities for collective work and leaving no one behind. One delegation noted that they would seek an evaluation of the implementation of the Common Chapter.

38. To ensure the effective delivery of the Strategic Plan, it was noted that UN-Women needs a sustainable inflow of flexible funding. UN-Women's efforts in closing the funding gap were congratulated, and a delegation noted that the increase in funding was the result of the effective partnerships that the Entity has created. Some delegations pledged their continuing financial support and encouraged others to join.

39. Speaking on behalf of seven other delegations, one delegation encouraged UN-Women to be transparent with the Executive Board on the rollout of the change-management process, including any plans to revise relevant policies. Specifically, they requested assurances that: the independence of evaluation will be retained; evaluations will remain consistent with the standards and norms of the UN Evaluation Group, and; the new audit function will coordinate closely with the Office of Investigation and Oversight.

40. Numerous Member States were welcoming of UN-Women's presentation on HIV/AIDS, and commended UN-Women for its coordinated efforts with UNAIDS in tackling the HIV/AIDS epidemic. One Member State acknowledged that gender-based violence, sexual violence and a lack of education opportunities represent major barriers preventing women and girls from receiving HIV treatment. Another Member State highlighted its domestic progress in advancing comprehensive sexual education for its citizens, noting that promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights is key to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

41. Welcoming UN-Women's efforts to integrate HIV/AIDS considerations into its work given budgetary challenges, a Member State requested further information on the implementation of the UNAIDS 2016–2017 Strategy.

42. One Member State, recognising the importance of UN-Women's work in tackling the HIV/AIDS epidemic, requested that UN-Women's programmes do not serve to substitute UNAIDS and World Health Organisation (WHO) programmes.

43. Various delegations mentioned the Secretary-General's repositioning of the United Nations Development System process and saw it as a key opportunity to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment in the United Nations system. It was noted that a more strategic approach to gender mainstreaming is required and that UN-Women should be an integral part of the reform process, working together with sister agencies and fully utilising its coordination role. Thus, Member States looked forward to more progress on coordination across United Nations agencies. A delegation urged UN-Women to align its strategic planning and business model with the outcome of the reforms, once agreed by Member States.

44. The Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy was highlighted by many delegations as a welcomed first step to achieving gender equality in the United Nations. Member States have been active in championing this initiative, for example,

through the cross-regional Group of Friends for Gender Parity. However, more needs to be done to make gender parity a reality. In this regard, the United Nations should enhance its gender-analysis capabilities, including statistics disaggregated by sex. Leadership and accountability are key issues in work. One delegation noted that while attaining gender parity at all levels in the United Nations was important, equitable geographic distribution should also be taken into consideration.

45. There was wide agreement with the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director's remark that there is historical momentum for changing the culture of sexual harassment and ending impunity. In this respect, Member States commended the Secretary-General's declared zero tolerance five-step action plan. The United Nations system, including UN-Women, is expected to have robust systems and processes in place to prevent sexual harassment and abuse and to fully investigate complaints, as well as provide the best possible support and protection for those affected.

46. The importance of UN-Women's work in eradicating violence against women and gender related killings, including femicide, was underlined by many speakers. While much needs to be done in all regions, work has already contributed to changing mindsets. In addition to the effects of violence on women and girls, its heavy cost for economies was also pointed out. UN-Women was encouraged to further strengthen its efforts and to utilise the evidence emerging from the UN Trust Fund to drive effective action.

47. Many delegations highlighted their domestic efforts at closing the gender pay gap, including in engaging with the private sector on the issue. One delegation highlighted the Equal Pay Coalition (EPIC), a joint effort to achieve pay equality.

48. In the context of the devastating cyclone that hit several countries, including Sao Tome, Tonga, Fiji and Samoa, some delegations underlined that women and girls face heightened risks in humanitarian emergencies, and that humanitarian programming must be gender responsive. One delegation opined that there is an increasing need for UN-Women's work in peace, security and humanitarian fields. UN-Women's LEAP programme (Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection in Crises Response) was singled out as a good model for this work. Regarding peace and security work, it was noted that women peace activists should be viewed and promoted as agents of change and peacebuilders in their societies. One delegation commended UN-Women for its unique ability to build and consolidate networks of women mobilising for peace.

49. Referring to the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, some delegations also touched upon the importance of work on STEM. UN-Women was encouraged to engage in global advocacy to increase women's visibility and agency in science and technology.

50. Some delegations also looked forward to the Commission on the Status of Women with its main theme on "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls" and committed to working together with other Member States and UN-Women for a successful outcome.

51. The Director of the UNAIDS Liaison Office in New York took the floor to commend UN-Women for its chairing of the Committee of Cosponsoring Organisations in 2017, which led to the development of an Action Plan to refine the operating model of the Joint Programme. He thanked UN-Women for maintaining their programmes on HIV/AIDS and supporting the UNAIDS 2016–2017 Strategy despite funding restrictions. He expressed confidence that the implementation of the Action Plan will further strengthen collaborative efforts and greatly enhance the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment. Finally, the director noted that the realisation of the SDG target to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030 will not be

achieved without ending the epidemic among women and girls, and is confident that UN-Women's strategic approach will help lead the way to accomplishing this goal.

52. UN-Women's Policy Adviser on HIV/AIDS thanked Member States for their comments and support in combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic among women and girls. In response to questions regarding UN-Women's involvement with the Global Prevention Coalition, the Policy Adviser indicated that the Entity assisted in the development of a roadmap, and worked closely with UNFPA to address issues of education and raising awareness of negotiating safer sex. UN-Women is also considering linking its programmatic initiatives with the EU/UN Spotlight initiative to address ending violence against women in the Eastern and Southern African region.

53. In response to a member state's concerns with the use of the terminology "gender transformative interventions", the Policy Adviser on HIV/AIDS indicated that while the term did not appear in the 2016 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, the term was used in the background paper to address the issue of transforming discriminatory gender norms.

54. The Assistant Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director, Mr. Yannick Glemarec, elaborating on the relationship between the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and the reform of the UN development system, stated that UN-Women is integrating QCPR recommendations in the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Furthermore, he assured Member States that all key directions from the Secretary-General's report would be reflected in the Strategic Plan's implementation.

55. Addressing the importance of the common chapter, he informed Member States that UN-Women and its sister agencies have been meeting on a regular basis to operationalise the common chapter. As a first step, UN Funds and Programmes looked into implementing the Spotlight initiative to end violence against women at the country level through joint programmes and using it as a blueprint for future joint initiatives.

56. The ASG assured member states that UN-Women enhanced its planning process, ensuring coherence among country offices and departments as the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 is translated into action. The document has been broken down into four years, with defined objectives across all countries, further broken down into individual performance plans.

57. Finally, the ASG assured member states that UN-Women is fully committed to maintaining the independence of the evaluation office and that it continues to follow UNDG standards.

B. Briefing on innovation strategy for accelerating efforts towards gender equality and the empowerment of women

58. The Assistant Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director led the presentation on innovations, one of the key drivers of change in the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021. With current capacities and knowledge, the 2030 agenda cannot be achieved by the set time, unless trends are changed. Change is not impossible and it can be done through innovations. However, innovations do not necessarily benefit men and women alike. Firstly, access to innovations for women facing many pre-existing gender biases might never happen. Secondly, even when women have access to innovations, the innovation can be gender-blind. Thirdly, innovation can even entrench gender biases.

59. UN-Women is now working on scaling up technological and financial innovations. The innovation strategy has four main objectives:

1) Awareness and market transformation to make innovations work for women, which is not only an issue of the common good but also a business imperative;

2) Engendering the design of innovations to ensure that gender is considered in all stages of the innovation process, from identifying the innovations to its design and implementation;

3) Increasing the involvement of women innovators to tackle one of the reasons innovations continue to be gender-blind, which is women's underrepresentation in this field;

4) Embedding innovations in all programming to strengthen programme effectiveness and efficiency.

60. The Assistant Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director gave an example of exploring mobile applications ("apps") technology. A "Buy from Women" app allows women farmers to map their farms, calculate production, create contracts and accelerate their production and sales. Another example is an ID card for refugee women living in camps which allows women to get access to all UN Services in a coordinated manner. Regarding the accessibility of this technology, he noted that UN multidimensional hubs offer access to electricity and the Internet, and that some of the technology is also accessible through cards instead of mobile phones. UN-Women is also exploring blockchain technology and organised a workshop on the matter in January.

61. UN-Women continues to work together with other UN organisations in creating and supporting innovations and identifying options and solutions. The UN-Women Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director has been invited to be on the Board of the Sustainable Digital Finance Alliance, which seeks to explore how to better align digital finance solutions with sustainable development.

62. In conclusion, the Assistant Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director noted that UN-Women is currently in the prototyping phase and will be moving to the piloting phase by the end of this year, with a possibility to shift to the following phase next year.

63. In response, delegations noted the importance of this discussion at the Executive Board and commended UN-Women for having innovations as a key driver of change in the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and for developing an innovation strategy. Delegations highlighted that this issue is a priority in their countries as women need to be actors, decision-makers, and beneficiaries of innovations as trends need to be broken to accelerate change. There is a need to invest in research and gender-sensitive innovation systems and to ensure that benefits are accessible and available for both women and men. It must be ensured that innovations and technology are addressing women's real needs and are user friendly. A delegation expressed its hope that the implementation will be expanded to many countries. UN-Women was asked how innovations investment capacities are planned to be enhanced.

64. The Assistant Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director noted that the current innovation strategy is an overall framework for UN-Women's work on innovation. In addition, UN-Women has prepared more detailed papers on how innovations are embedded in its programming. For example, a technical brief on innovations submitted to the Executive Board in 2016 discusses the impacts of innovations and how to assess their return rate. He also agreed that in addition to promoting gender equality, innovations need to be user friendly. UN-Women works closely with beneficiaries to train them and to ensure that they have full control over the technology they are using.

C. Briefing on the operational response at country level: Haiti

65. The Officer in Charge of the UN-Women Country Office in Haiti outlined the work and priorities of UN-Women and the context of the Country. Several changes have taken place in Haiti, including a change in Government in 2017, as well as the departure of the UN stabilisation mission, MINUSTAH, and the creation of MINUJUSTH, a political mission working on the rule of law and justice in Haiti.

66. UN-Women is currently renewing its Strategic Note in Haiti. The challenges that exist include access to services, resources and opportunities for women as well as the feminisation of poverty. UN-Women works in four priority areas: 1) strengthening institutional and normative frameworks; 2) women's political participation and ending violence against women in this context; 3) access to justice and the rule of law; and 4) women's economic empowerment.

67. UN-Women has also identified three sources of growth. Firstly, UN-Women has provided institutional strengthening and support to the Ministry of Women's Affairs to ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout the Government. Secondly, UN-Women works on closing the gender gap in agricultural productivity and service delivery. Thirdly, UN-Women works with partners on changing socio-economic systems in an integrated manner. Partnerships allow progress in joint initiatives on the country level.

68. After Hurricane Matthew, UN-Women played an important role in humanitarian efforts, established partnerships to provide women with equal footing, and ensured that gender was integrated at all levels of the humanitarian response.

69. In cooperation with the Government of Haiti, UN-Women played a key role in ensuring a slight growth in women's representation in the Lower Chamber and the Senate, although the percentage of women lawmakers remains low. At the municipal level, women now have more than 30% representation, which is the largest number in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Building upon this, UN-Women will work with the Government of Haiti to ensure that this success is repeated at the parliament level.

70. Regarding the economic empowerment of women, UN-Women has set up a certified training programme for women farmers producing moringa, which is currently in demand at the international level. Haiti is also participating in the innovative "Buy from Women" Platform.

71. On ending violence against women, UN-Women has supported the Government of Haiti in creating a ten-year National Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence, which was finalised in 2017.

72. The representative from the Permanent Mission of Haiti expressed his gratitude to UN-Women for the work done in Haiti in coordinating gender equality programmes and for the support to the Government of Haiti in gender mainstreaming and accelerating strategies to enhance women's participation in political decision-making at all levels. The representative noted that gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution of Haiti, and that the Government has also established a quota of 30% in decision-making positions. However, female representation in elected positions remains low and requires continued measures. The Haitian Government welcomed the quality and constructive partnership with UN-Women and applauded the tangible results achieved on the ground and, in addition, extended its gratitude to partner countries for their solidarity and financial and technical support. While significant progress has been made in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Speaker noted that there is still work to be done, and encouraged

UN-Women to continue to support the priorities of the Haitian Government at all levels.

V. Closing

73. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the President for her efficient leadership throughout the session, as well as the Vice-Presidents for their contributions before and during the meeting. She thanked Member States for their statements, including the questions and issues they raised throughout the session. The head of the Entity reflected on several of the concerns raised by Member States, including combating sexual exploitation and abuse within the UN system. She also thanked Member States for their positive reception of UN-Women's presentation on the follow-up to recommendations of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, and remarked that despite limited resources, UN-Women was able to reach a significant number of women and girls who are affected by HIV and AIDS.

74. The President thanked the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her closing remarks and expressed her deep appreciation for UN-Women's work in Haiti, as well as the hands-on experience delegates took part in with UN-Women's innovations. The President expressed enthusiasm at seeing UN-Women's first steps in implementing the new Strategic Plan 2018–2021 amid the reform of the UN development system, and expressed appreciation of UN-Women's actions in operationalising the common chapter together with sister agencies. In closing, the President thanked her fellow Bureau members, the Executive Board Secretary and his team for their effective and unwavering support.

Annex I

Provisional workplan

Day	*Time*	*Item*	*Subject*
Tuesday, 19 June	10 a.m.–1 p.m.		Opening of the session
			• Statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women
		1	Organisational matters
			• Adoption of the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2018
			• Adoption of the report on the first regular session of 2018
		2	Annual Report of the Executive Director
			• Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the Strategic Plan 2014–2017
			Informal consultations on draft decisions
	3 p.m.–6 p.m.		Annual Report of the Executive Director (*continued*)
			Informal consultations on draft decisions
Wednesday, 20 June	10 a.m.–1 p.m.	3	Financial, budgetary and administrative matters
			• Report on cost recovery
		4	Evaluation
			• Report on the evaluation function, 2017
			• Corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to political participation and leadership
			• Management response
			Informal consultations on draft decisions
	3 p.m.–6 p.m.	5	Audit matters
			• Report on the internal audit and investigation activities for the period 1 January to 31 December 2017
			• Report of the Audit Advisory Committee
			• Management responses
			• Management response to Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) reports issued in 2017
			• Briefing on the establishment of the in-house internal audit function
			Briefing on UN-Women operational response at the country level: Tanzania

Day	*Time*	*Item*	*Subject*
		6	Other matters
			Adoption of draft decisions
		1	Organisational matters
			Approval of the provisional agenda and workplan for the second regular session of 2018
			Closing of the session
			• Statements by the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women and the President of the Executive Board

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Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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Organizational matters

Annual Report of the Under Secretary-General/Executive Director on the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017

Summary

This report provides an overview of results achieved in 2017, during the final year of implementation of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2014–2017, and takes stock of progress made through the entire four-year cycle. The report also addresses progress on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the UN system (QCPR).

Based on the analysis of each development outcome and organizational effectiveness and efficiency output, UN-Women has achieved the majority of the objectives in its results frameworks. Insights and lessons learned from the past four years have informed the development of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

A draft decision is included in section V.

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I. Introduction

1. 2017 saw unprecedented global attention to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, with important progress in several areas. The #MeToo movement gave rise to an unparalleled number of women speaking out about sexual harassment, violence and abuse across the media, politics, workplaces and communities. Countries have continued to strengthen laws to eliminate violence against women and harmful practices. The agreed conclusions of the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women established path-breaking commitments to eliminate barriers to women's empowerment in the world of work.

2. Despite these developments, women continue to be severely under-represented in leadership and decision-making across all arenas; major gender gaps remain in the economy; and violence against women persists at alarmingly high levels. The role of women's organizations in advancing gender equality is hampered by funding cuts, the lack of a safe and enabling environment and the targeting of women's human rights defenders. Growing insecurity, displacement and the detrimental impacts of climate change also put progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment at risk. Challenges are particularly acute for those who face multiple forms of discrimination and who are most at risk of being left behind.

3. Against this background, 2017 was a year of consolidation and growth for UN-Women. This final progress report on the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan describes significant results achieved since 2014, which reflect UN-Women's growing capacity to leverage its triple mandate, substantive expertise, partnerships and evidence base to deliver for women and girls. This capacity positions UN-Women strategically in the context of ongoing discussions to reposition the UN Development System in support of better system-wide results for women and girls.

4. UN-Women has significantly contributed to strengthening global norms and standards and translating them into action at the country level. Flagship Programming Initiatives (FPIs) have sharpened UN-Women's programmatic focus, provided a common framework for collaboration at national level, and supported resource mobilization efforts. The UN System-Wide Action Plan has become a model benchmarking tool, strengthening accountability for gender equality commitments and enhancing gender mainstreaming across the UN system. All these efforts have been underpinned by UN-Women's commitment to reach women and girls who are at greatest risk of being left behind.

5. In the last four years, UN-Women demonstrated its capacity to deliver transformative programming with efficiency and impact. UN-Women rolled out several business improvement processes, including a suite of programme management information systems to improve forecasting, planning, monitoring and reporting. In 2017, UN-Women has reached its highest total income since inception.

6. These results and lessons learned, as well as an extensive consultative process, have informed the development of the new Strategic Plan 2018–2021, which was adopted by the Executive Board in 2017. The new Strategic Plan continues to support the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, has clear results pathways that draw on theories of change, and leverages UN-Women's unique role in catalyzing action, convening partners, mobilizing and advocating for change, and supporting resource mobilization for gender equality and women's empowerment. The common chapter with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA provides an important basis to enhance coherence and joint action.

AT A GLANCE

Since 2014, UN-Women, in collaboration with partners, contributed to the following:

- 17 constitutional reform processes supported
- 41 countries, with a combined female population of over 2 billion, adopted policy frameworks for women's economic empowerment
- 52 countries, with a combined female population of over 1.5 billion, strengthened legislation to address violence against women and girls
- 43 countries, with a combined female population of over 1.48 billion, increased budget allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment
- 1,012 companies signed onto the WEPs
- Over 7.5 million practitioners accessed expert knowledge at endVAWnow.org
- Over 300 female military officers have completed UN-Women-supported training courses before deployment in peace operations
- 71 experts deployed to support sexual and gender-based violence investigations, including to national authorities and the International Criminal Court
- Civil servants of national AIDS coordinating bodies in 55 countries increased their capacities for gender mainstreaming in the HIV response
- A five-fold increase in the deployment of gender expertise to humanitarian crises
- An average annual participation of 2,500 officials and more than 3,700 civil society representatives at the CSW
- An increase from 640,000 social media followers in 2014 to 6.5 million in 2017
- 114,018 people trained by the Training Centre, 24,545 people who have completed the I Know Gender course

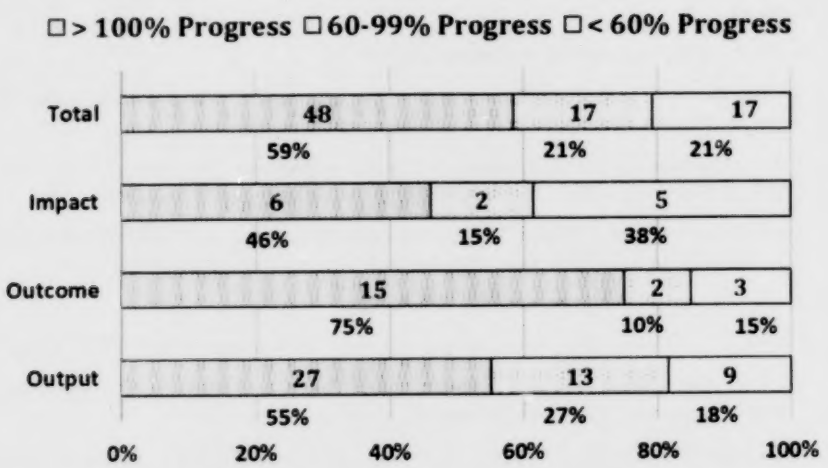
In 2017 alone, the following results were also achieved:

- 27 laws amended or reformed in 17 countries, with a combined female population of almost 164 million
- Nearly 7,000 women leaders, aspiring candidates and elected public officials in 32 countries with strengthened capacity
- 121,000 crisis affected women and girls assisted in 31 countries
- Economic empowerment and livelihood services delivered for over 35,000 women and girls in humanitarian situations
- 59 safe spaces and 67 multi-purpose centres run in humanitarian programmes
- 70 per cent of UNDAFs feature gender-specific results

II. Assessment of development results

7. Between 2014 and 2017, UN-Women delivered programmes in a total of 132 countries. At the end of the Strategic Plan period, UN-Women's performance against its targets is positive with 80 per cent of targets fully or largely met (Figure 1).

Figure 1.
Achievement of Strategic Plan Targets



8. It is notable that this performance corresponds quite closely to funding levels, with a funding gap of nearly 20 per cent compared to integrated budget targets for 2014–2017.

9. With only three targets below 60 per cent, performance is particularly strong at the outcome level. There has been significant progress at the output level over the 2014–2017 period, with nine additional targets met or reaching at least 60 per cent in 2017 alone.

10. An analysis of indicators below 60 per cent showed that there is no single explanation but a mix of factors at play, including over-ambitious target-setting, funding constraints, imprecise indicator formulation which compromised reporting, data gaps, and lack of prioritization of specific outputs by field offices. Nevertheless, poor performance at the output level did not always translate into gaps at the outcome and impact levels and is more reflective of sporadic gaps than systemic problems in UN-Women's results structure.

11. Building on this analysis, UN-Women has further strengthened the results chain in its new integrated results and resources framework 2018–2021, developed theories of change for each output, and provided a greater level of accuracy in the level of attribution of results. It will be essential for UN-Women to continue its work in results definition, including joint results with the rest of the UN system, in the course of the new Strategic Plan.

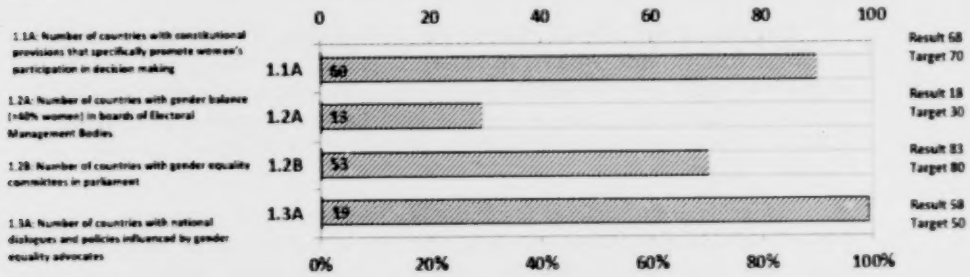
12. The analysis of the impact areas below presents results for the 2014–2017 period with specific examples from 2017.

A. Impact area 1: women lead and participate in decision-making at all levels

From 2014 to 2017, in this impact area:

13. Over the course of the Strategic Plan 2014–2017, UN-Women has made significant progress to increase women's leadership and political participation, by contributing to gender-responsive legislation and constitutional reforms, support for women's participation in politics and increasing women's representation in national parliaments and local governments, and support for gender-responsive political institutions (Figure 2).[1]

Figure 2.



14. In total, UN-Women contributed to 17 constitutional reform processes between 2014 and 2017. In 2017, UN-Women worked in Nepal for the effective implementation of the constitutional provisions related to women's political participation, resulting in the election of 14,000 women at the local level. In Georgia, UN-Women supported constitutional reforms to provide guarantees for gender equality, including special measures on women's representation. El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Trinidad and Tobago enacted legal reforms to eliminate child marriage in 2017, with the support of UN-Women.

15. UN-Women worked closely with Parliaments around the world for the establishment of gender equality committees in 83 countries. Forty-eight parliaments have approved gender-responsive legislation with UN-Women's support. In Haiti, UN-Women supported the Parliament in 2017 for the development of a gender equality strategy with a formal commitment to prevent violence against women in elections. In Niger, UN-Women's support engaged 121 parliamentarians, leading them to conduct outreach to around 100,000 women on gender-based violence and establish a specialized gender unit in Parliament.

[1] The Fund for Gender Equality contributes to this impact area, as well as impact area 2. See Annex 4 for more details.

16. As a result of UN-Women's support in 2017, in coordination with UN partners, boards of 18 national Electoral Management Bodies reached 40 per cent or more women. Over 50 per cent of countries receiving UN Electoral Assistance adopted reforms to promote women's political participation. UN-Women's support led the Bolivian Electoral Tribunal to enact a gender policy, committing to gender-responsive electoral processes to increase women's participation as voters, candidates and electoral officials. In DRC, UN-Women supported the electoral commission to increase the number of women voters registered, resulting in an estimated 46 per cent of women voters registered.

17. In line with the Flagship Programme on Women's Political Empowerment, UN-Women has strengthened the capacity of nearly 7,000 aspiring and elected women leaders in 2017. In Algeria, capacity-strengthening for women candidates to 2017 local elections contributed to increasing women's representation in local assemblies and governorates, with an additional 600 women elected at the governorate level. In Kenya, UN-Women trained more than 400 female aspiring candidates and 149 female nominated candidates, contributing to the election of three women governors and three women senators for the first time.

18. Between 2014 and 2017, with UN-Women's support, gender equality advocates influenced national dialogues and policies in 58 countries. In Cameroon, UN-Women convened a coalition to promote women's representation in the 2018 election, resulting in the establishment of gender-responsive voter registration. In Solomon Islands, UN-Women supported a coalition of women's organisations to secure political support for provincial gender policies and reserved seats.

19. UN-Women has worked closely with UN partners in this area, mainly the Department of Political Affairs, including as part of an interagency coordination mechanism on electoral assistance. UNDP continues to be a key partner with several joint projects and initiatives, as well as joint knowledge products, including the iKNOW Politics portal, developed in partnership with IDEA and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

20. Achieving gender balance in politics is a long-term process requiring efforts to prevent backsliding. Unfavourable legal frameworks and increasing violence against women in politics are persistent challenges that UN-Women has integrated in its new Strategic Plan, which also recognizes the mutually reinforcing relationship between women's political participation and leadership, women's access to justice and gender-responsive planning and budgeting by bringing them together under one outcome.

Women's access to justice

While access to justice was not explicitly included in the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan, the importance of this area of work to eliminate gender-based discrimination made it grow in importance in UN-Women's work since 2014. As a result, the new strategic plan includes a dedicated result on the issue and a Flagship Programming Initiative was launched.

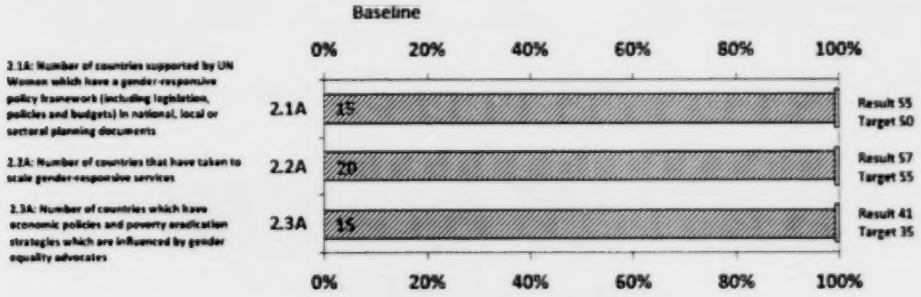
In 2017, UN-Women supported Bolivia in starting to develop new Family, Civil and Criminal Codes; helped more than 1,000 women receive legal aid in Uganda; and supported the Government in Viet Nam in undertaking a perception survey of the justice system among women. UN-Women launched a "Practitioner's Toolkit on Women's Access to Justice Programming" with UNDP, UNODC and OHCHR in support of SDG 16.

B. Impact area 2: women, especially the poorest and most excluded, are economically empowered and benefit from development

From 2014 to 2017, in this impact area:

21. Over 2014–2017, UN-Women made substantial contributions to women's economic empowerment, exceeding all targets at the outcome level (Figure 3). Key achievements include the adoption of national frameworks for women's economic empowerment, enhancements to women's livelihoods and support to gender equality advocates to influence national strategies and policies.

Figure 3.



22. UN-Women's support was pivotal for the adoption or implementation of national plans, policies, strategies and legislation to promote women's economic empowerment in 55 countries. In 2017, with UN-Women's support, the Central Bureau of Statistics of Sudan generated sex-disaggregated data for the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. UN-Women, in partnership with the African Development Bank, contributed to the adoption of regulations to promote the rights of domestic workers in Cabo Verde.

23. UN-Women contributed to scaling up and delivering services to women in 57 countries, including social assistance and employment services, and supporting skills development and entrepreneurship opportunities for women in 36 countries in 2017 alone. In line with the commitment to leave no one behind, UN-Women worked with partners in Guatemala to improve the knowledge of 1,650 rural indigenous women on agriculture, food security, and entrepreneurship to improve their agricultural production and access to markets. In Georgia, UN-Women provided livelihood

support grants and capacity development on entrepreneurship to nearly 2,500 women affected by conflict or internally displaced.

24. UN-Women strengthened the capacity of gender equality advocates to influence economic policies and poverty eradication strategies in 41 countries over the course of the Strategic Plan. In 2017, in Brazil, advocacy efforts led by the National Federation of Domestic Workers with UN-Women were crucial for the ratification of ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Workers, extending full labour rights to the 7 million domestic workers in Brazil, most of whom are women. In Timor-Leste, UN-Women's advocacy efforts with civil society contributed to the adoption of a new law strengthening women's rights to own land and property.

25. UN-Women's approach to climate-smart agriculture developed in its FPI was endorsed by other UN agencies in the context of the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel 2018–2022. Gender equality, women's empowerment and climate action are amongst the priority areas for the implementation of the strategy.

26. The Rome-based agencies, FAO, IFAD and WFP, have been key partners of UN-Women for this impact area. UN-Women has also strengthened its partnership with International Financial Institutions, especially the World Bank and regional development banks. Close collaboration with specialized agencies, such as the ILO, were instrumental, particularly in supporting a strengthened normative agenda and its implementation for decent work and social protection.

27. Since 2014 and in line with the evaluation of this impact area, UN-Women refocused its work away from smaller-scale interventions toward more systemic advocacy, reforms, and policy implementation, which accelerated progress at the outcome level. The new Strategic Plan focuses on three areas of UN-Women's comparative advantage: policies on decent work and social protection; promotion of women's entrepreneurship; and women's engagement in climate-resilient agriculture.

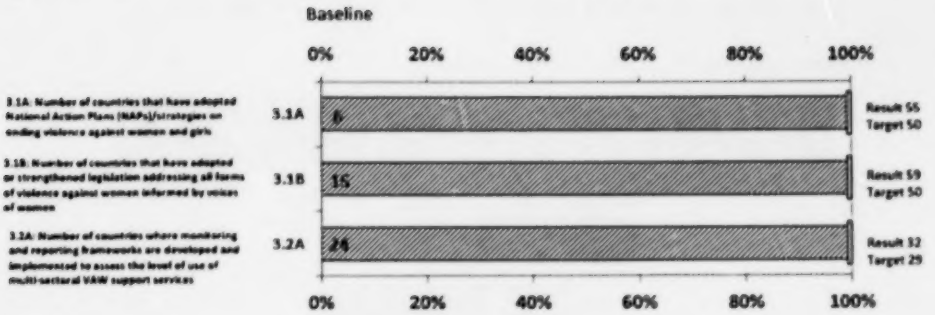
C. Impact area 3: ending violence against women and girls

From 2014 to 2017, in this impact area:

28. UN-Women achieved all its outcome targets on ending all forms of violence against women and girls by strengthening legislation and policies, improving quality services for survivors, and driving policy shifts that better reflect the importance of addressing social norms, and preventing violence against women in private and public spaces (Figure 4).[2]

[2] The UN Trust Fund in support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women contributes to this impact area. See Annex 4.

Figure 4.



29. In 2017, 21 countries supported by UN-Women strengthened national legislation to prevent and respond to violence against women, while 12 countries adopted national action plans and strategies. In Tunisia, UN-Women supported civil society advocacy leading to the adoption of a comprehensive law addressing violence against women. UN-Women also supported Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon in repealing rape laws that exempted perpetrators from prosecution and punishment if they married their victims.

30. UN-Women achieved commitments from Government, NGOs and donors to increase the availability of shelters in Ethiopia, including in remote communities. In Fiji, UN-Women partnered with Oceania Rugby to provide more than 2,000 girls and boys with the opportunity, through sports, to learn how to prevent violence against women and girls. In line with the commitment to leave no one behind, UN-Women has supported the provision of services to women and girls who have experienced violence, with a special focus on women with disabilities.

31. At the first-ever Global Mayors' Meeting on Gender Equality, 12 city governments strengthened their commitments to address sexual harassment in public spaces as part of safe cities. In the Philippines, good practices of Quezon Safe Cities programme were shared with 16 other cities in Metro Manila to support scaling-up the initiative.

32. Working in partnership with other UN agencies to leverage expertise and resources has been a focus of the work on ending violence against women. Through the Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for women and girls subject to violence, UN-Women in partnership with UNODC, UNDP, UNFPA and WHO, has piloted guidelines for the health, justice and policing and social services sectors.

33. Building on existing Flagship Programme Initiatives, UN-Women became a founding partner of the "Spotlight Initiative", a partnership between the United Nations and the European Union, which will provide large-scale investments to integrate a comprehensive approach to ending violence against women and girls, with a focus on leaving no one behind. As a Sustainable Development Goal model fund, the initiative, which brings together UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women, reflects an innovative approach for catalyzing an enhanced UN response.

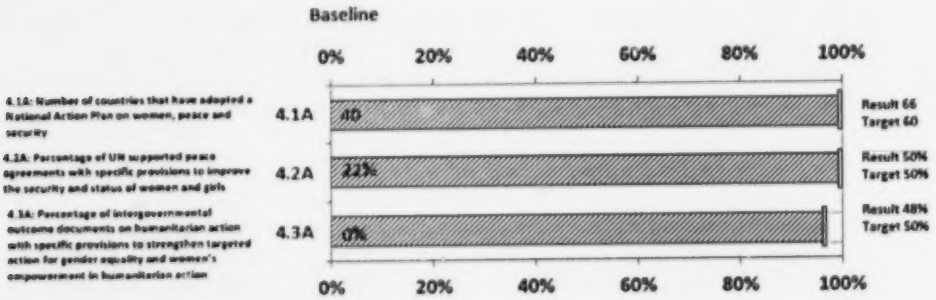
34. A stronger focus is required not only on expanding work on strengthening the availability of services for survivors, but also preventing violence against women and girls before it happens in private as well as public spaces, notably through transforming discriminatory social norms. The Strategic Plan 2018–2021 reflects these lessons.

D. Impact area 4: peace and security and humanitarian action are shaped by women's leadership and participation

From 2014 to 2017, in this impact area:

35. UN-Women achieved significant progress to ensure women's participation and leadership in peace and security and humanitarian action, achieving two (and nearly achieving the third) outcome targets in this area (Figure 5). UN-Women supported increased women's participation in mediation and conflict-prevention efforts; enhanced the gender-responsiveness of rule of law and security sector reform; ensured that efforts to counter violent extremism and terrorism are gender-responsive; strengthened humanitarian coordination mechanisms and provided support to women and girls in crisis contexts.

Figure 5.



36. A total of 66 countries have adopted national action plans on women, peace and security, 72 per cent with monitoring and evaluation frameworks. In 2017, UN-Women supported the development of action plans in Jordan, Nepal and the League of Arab States. The cross-regional Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network, of which UN-Women is the secretariat, grew from 45 to nearly 80 Member States and Regional Organizations.

37. UN-Women continued its engagement with the Security Council. In 2017, nine women civil society leaders participated in briefings to the Council with UN-Women's support. UN-Women's partnership with the Peacebuilding Support Office has increased funding for activities advancing gender equality from the Peacebuilding Fund from 20 per cent in 2016 to 36 per cent in 2017.

38. In Guatemala, UN-Women supported the survivors from the Sepur Zarco case in pursuit of truth, justice and reparation, resulting in the first-ever conviction for conflict-related sexual violence in a domestic court. In Liberia, UN-Women successfully worked with the Government and UN partners to focus on inclusivity, women's participation and leadership in the Liberia Transition Plan.

39. Since 2014, UN-Women has provided gender expertise and supported women's meaningful participation in peace processes in Colombia, Syria and Yemen. In Yemen, women's organizations supported by UN-Women provided specific recommendations and increased their influence in the peace process.

40. 2017 saw an increase in support for joint rule-of-law programmes in the Central African Republic, Mali, the State of Palestine and Somalia. In the State of Palestine, UN-Women's advocacy resulted in increased representation of women in justice and security institutions and greater participation of women's organizations in justice institutions.

41. Since 2014, over 300 female military officers have completed UN-Women-supported training for deployment in peace operations. In 2017, UN-Women, in partnership with Justice Rapid Response, deployed 23 sexual and gender-based violence investigators, gender advisors and mentors to support investigations and justice processes in 11 countries, including truth commissions in Mali, where 20 per cent of the commission's key staff are now women. In total since 2014, UN-Women deployed 71 experts to support investigations and accountability processes, including to national authorities and the International Criminal Court.

42. Ensuring the gender-responsiveness of preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism has been a growing priority for UN-Women during this Strategic Plan cycle in close collaboration with CTED and UNOCT. In 2017, UN-Women initiated one of its largest programmes with over 3,200 women in communities in Indonesia and Bangladesh to build social cohesion and prevent radicalization. In Bangladesh, over 90,000 individuals have attended 226 community theatre shows focusing on community harmony.

43. Working coherently with other UN entities is fundamental to achieving progress on the women, peace and security agenda. In this area, UN-Women works closely with DPA, DPKO, the Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence and Conflict, PBSO, UNDP and UNICEF, among others. In 2017 UN-Women and OHCHR supported UN investigations. Along with EOSG, OHCHR, UNHCR and UNODC, UN-Women is a core member of the Global Focal Point arrangement on police, justice and corrections.

44. Over the 2014–2017 period, demands for UN-Women in dynamic security contexts continued to increase. Translation of global commitments into concrete action remains a challenge and the new Strategic Plan places particular focus on this aspect.

Humanitarian action

45. UN-Women's engagement in humanitarian action has significantly evolved during this Strategic Plan period. UN-Women has sharpened its humanitarian strategy and expanded its activities in this area.

46. In 2017, UN-Women supported coordination mechanisms for humanitarian activities in 16 countries, and provided direct humanitarian services for 121,000 crisis-affected women and girls. Across 31 countries, UN-Women provided economic empowerment and livelihood services to 35,000 women and girls, and education opportunities for 3,700 girls in humanitarian settings. UN-Women deployed technical experts to nine humanitarian crises, a five-fold increase compared to 2014 deployments.

47. In response to Hurricane Irma in the Caribbean, and working with UNFPA, UN-Women distributed essential supplies for over 500 women and giris in Antigua and Barbuda and the British Virgin Islands. In Tanzania, UN-Women offered skills training, livelihood opportunities and referral to gender-based violence services to Burundian women refugees. In Cameroon, UN-Women provided integrated income-generation and protection services to 5,400 refugees, IDPs, former Boko Haram female hostages and vulnerable women from host communities. In Bangladesh, UN-Women negotiated access for female midwives and health workers to the Rohingya refugee camps, potentially saving the lives of hundreds of pregnant and other women refugees that required emergency medical attention.

48. UN-Women co-chaired the *Gender in Humanitarian Action Reference Group* of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), providing technical support to operationalize its commitment to gender equality in humanitarian action. In 2017, UN-Women led the development of the new *Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Humanitarian Action Policy* of the IASC, updating the global humanitarian system's commitments to gender equality and establishing a formal accountability framework to monitor its delivery.

49. UN-Women's partners in humanitarian action with a large group of agencies, including OCHA, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNISDR, IFRC and WFP, to implement specific programmes, including its humanitarian Flagship Programmes.

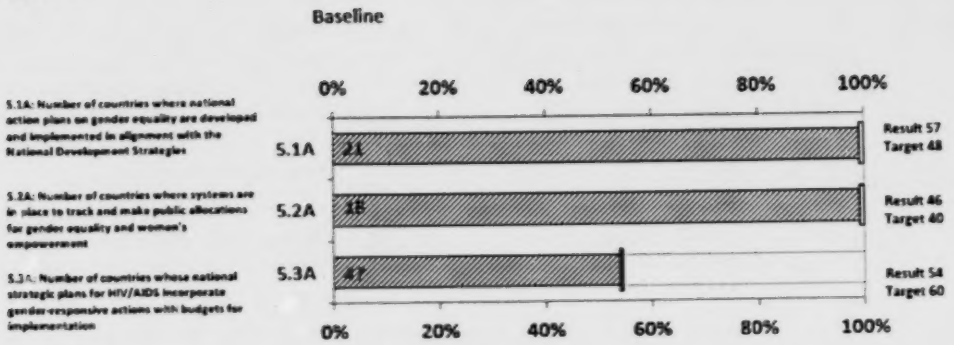
50. UN-Women has developed innovative approaches, such as blockchain technology and cash-based interventions, to enable transformative change for crisis-affected women and girls. These developments have been reflected in the new Strategic Plan, focusing on UN-Women's role of monitoring and holding to account the humanitarian system on gender equality commitments and on the delivery of the Flagship Programme Initiatives in this area.

E. Impact area 5: governance and national planning fully reflect accountability for gender equality commitments and priorities

From 2014 to 2017, in this impact area:

51. UN-Women has supported significant progress in integrating gender equality into national, sectoral and local plans and budgets, achieving and/or exceeding two of its three outcome level targets (Figure 6). Since 2014, UN-Women contributed to increased alignment between national gender equality action plans and national development strategies; the establishment of systems to track gender equality allocations; and stronger capacities of governments, gender equality advocates and women's organizations to integrate gender perspectives into planning and budgeting cycles.

Figure 6.



52. From 2014 to 2017, a total of 46 countries have put in place systems to track budget allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment and make the data publicly available. With UN-Women's support, the Dominican Republic has established a system to track gender equality allocations, demonstrating a consistent increase in allocations since 2015. In Serbia, UN-Women's support for gender-responsive budgeting has led to gender equality being included in budget objectives and programmes of 47 government institutions.

53. Since 2014, 43 countries have reported increased budget allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment. In Mexico, with UN-Women's support, the budget allocation to gender equality work has increased by 37 per cent since 2012. In line with the Flagship Programme on Transformative Financing, a new partnership with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will strengthen the capacities of governments to implement gender-responsive budgeting.

54. Twenty-four countries in 2017 alone developed and implemented national action plans for gender equality and mainstreamed gender perspectives in their national development strategies. With UN-Women's support, Cabo Verde successfully integrated gender equality across its new National Strategic Development Plan as part of localizing the Sustainable Development Goals. As part of its commitment to leave no one behind, UN-Women supported the engagement of vulnerable groups of women in Moldova to shape strategies for the second National Gender Equality Strategy with the Government.

55. From 2014 to 2017, UN-Women's support resulted in integrating gender equality actions with budgets into national HIV strategies in 54 countries. In Zimbabwe, UN-Women supported organizations of women living with HIV to successfully advocate for the integration of specific actions to support HIV prevention and care for adolescent girls and women, with an approved associated budget of USD 8 million. In 2017, UN-Women strengthened the capacity of the Viet Nam Authority of HIV/AIDS Control to effectively track the gender dimensions of HIV responses.

56. Results were achieved by working across the planning and budgeting cycle, and across fiscal policies and legislation. Further, the evaluation of UN-Women's approach to supporting gender equality in the context of HIV/AIDS found that the emphasis on strengthening capacity of the national AIDS coordinating bodies and engaging women living with HIV was a significant value added. Lessons learnt from this impact area have informed the development of the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan, which presents a holistic framework for gender-responsive governance and participation.

Responding to the data challenges of monitoring the SDGs for women and girls

In response to significant gaps for gender-responsive monitoring of the SDGs, UN-Women has worked with partners to lead the development of standards and methodologies in several areas, including Indicator 5.1.1 (legal frameworks to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex), 5.5.1b (proportion of women in local government) and 5.c.1 (systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment).

A key achievement of this work in 2017 is the reclassification by the IAEG-SDGs of indicators 5.5.1b and 5.c.1 as Tier II, recognizing that internationally accepted methodology and standard was successfully developed. A methodology was also developed by UN-Women and partners for Indicator 5.1.1.

To further address data gaps, particularly in the context of SDG monitoring, UN-Women's work on gender statistics has grown significantly with "Making Every Woman and Girl Count", a Flagship Programme that aims to bring about a radical shift in how gender statistics are created and used. As a result, UN-Women has incorporated an output on data in the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan.

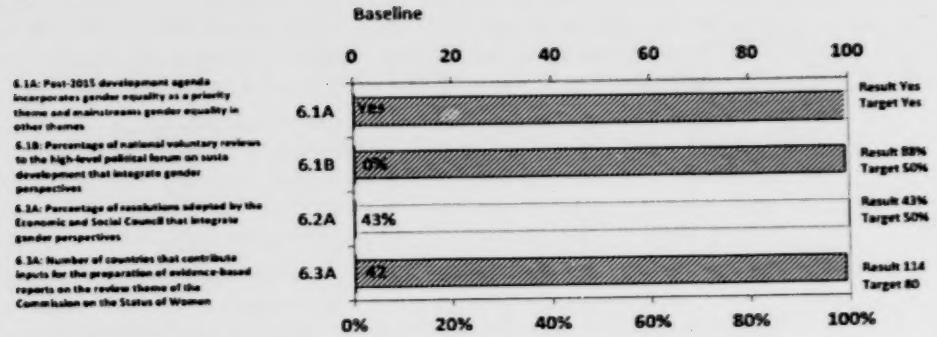
F. Impact area 6: a comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment

From 2014 to 2017, in this impact area:

Contributes to all the SDGs

57. The 2014–2017 period has been marked by significant successes in UN-Women's contribution to the development of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment (Figure 7).

Figure 7.



58. In particular, UN-Women's substantive analysis, stakeholder engagement and advocacy supported the reflection of gender equality as a stand-alone goal and cross-cutting priority in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as a strong commitment to gender equality in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Building on these milestones, UN-Women supported processes to monitor their gender-responsive implementation. In 2017, the Entity made substantial contributions to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which included the review of SDG 5, including by co-leading analysis of gender equality issues and providing expertise on the linkages between SDG 5 and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which fed into the Ministerial Declaration.

59. Since 2014, there has been significant growth of and increased engagement in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The CSW delivered several substantive outcomes, including the Political Declaration marking the 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the agreed conclusions adopted at the 60th session with a roadmap for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

60. In 2017, 2,130 officials and more than 3,900 civil society organizations participated in the CSW. UN-Women supported preparations for the 61st session, in close collaboration with the ILO on the substantive preparations, and by organizing regional preparatory meetings and consultations, convening a multi-stakeholder forum and providing substantive support to informal consultations. UN-Women created opportunities for intergenerational dialogue by supporting the voices of youth feminist leaders.

61. UN-Women focused on the integration of gender perspectives in other normative processes, such as climate change, HIV/AIDS, sustainable cities and human settlements, migration and the situation of least developed countries. In its engagement with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN-Women's technical and substantive support over the last five years contributed to the adoption of the first Gender Action Plan at the Conference of Parties in 2017.

62. UN-Women also provided substantive support to ECOSOC on gender mainstreaming and to the Forum for Financing for Development, which resulted in gender equality investments being recognized as essential to sustainable development. UN-Women provided substantive expertise to the negotiations of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, resulting in its resolution reflecting a commitment to mainstreaming a gender perspective.

63. From 2014 to 2017, UN-Women supported 64 Governments reporting under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

(CEDAW) or the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, working in coordination with OHCHR and UNCTs. In 2017, UN-Women supported Colombia to report to the CEDAW Committee, including through South-South cooperation. In Nepal, UN-Women's support enabled the National Women's Commission to advocate for policy and legal reforms to address the CEDAW concluding observations.

64. UN-Women worked in close collaboration with the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, in particular the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, including through the UN-Women/European Union Initiative to End Violence against Women and Girls in the Western Balkans and Turkey and a global study on transitional justice.

65. The strengthening of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment continued to be a foundation for UN-Women's operational activities. This was further reflected in the results structure of the new Strategic Plan.

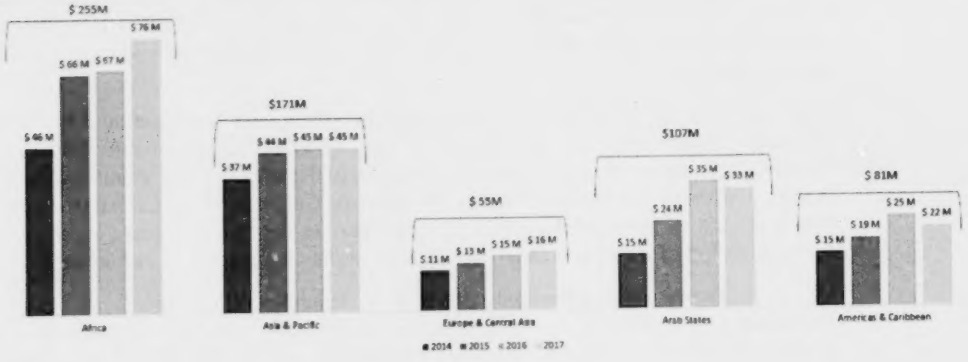
G. Programme expenditures and type of contribution

66. Total programme expenditures between 2014 and 2017 reached USD 915.3 million, with USD 249 million implemented in 2017. Expenditures in the field increased by 34 per cent over the four-year period, demonstrating growing partner confidence and success in resource mobilization. This growth was achieved alongside satisfactory corporate audits, reflecting UN-Women's capacity to implement, supported by streamlined business processes.

67. Geographically, the highest level of programme expenditures was in sub-Saharan Africa, followed by Asia-Pacific (Figure 8). Thematically, ending violence against women and girls had the highest expenditure (USD 258 million), followed by women, peace and security and humanitarian action (USD 212 million).

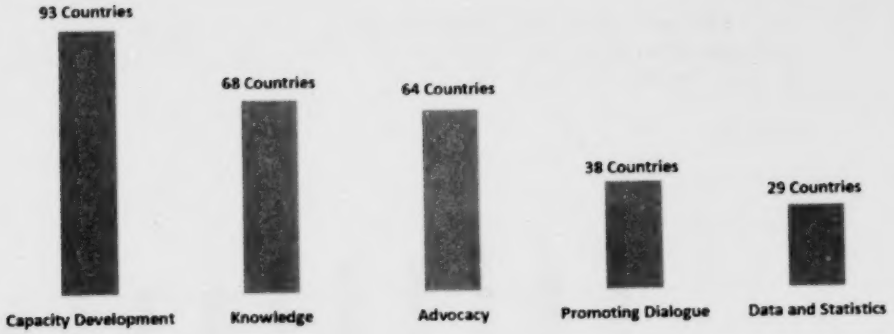
68. These trends were also supported by an increase in programmatic focus, with UN-Women achieving a 56 per cent reduction in the total number of outcomes pursued by all offices, driven in part by adoption of the Flagship Programming Initiatives.

Figure 8.



69. In 2017, capacity development continued to be prioritized in UN-Women's work, with 57 per cent of funds dedicated to this category (Figure 9). In the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, UN-Women has clarified the types of support it provides to better align them with its comparative advantages and the QCPR.

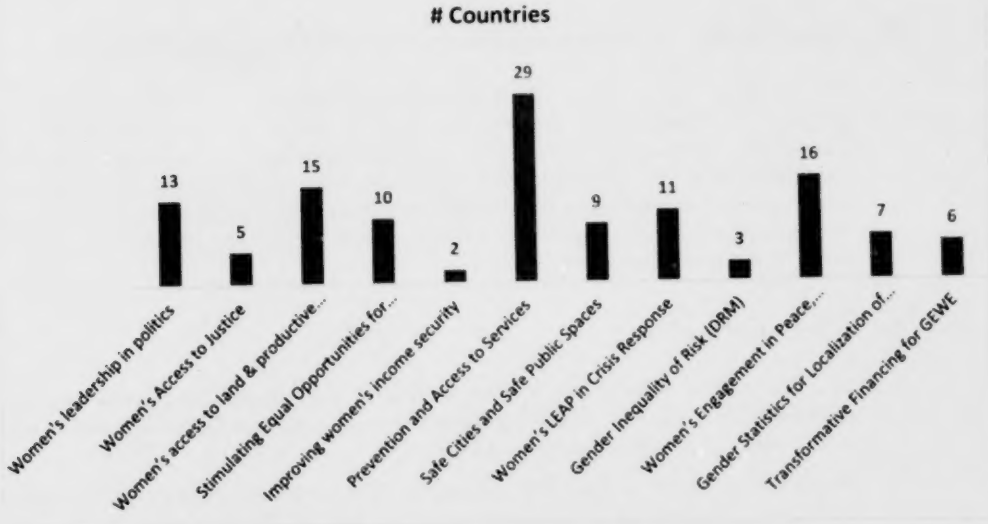
Figure 9.



H. Flagship Programming Initiatives

70. A key development to strengthen UN-Women's programming between 2014 and 2017 has been the development of Flagship Programming Initiatives (FPIs). In 2017, 57 per cent of development results from 49 country offices were aligned with FPIs theories of change. The high adoption rate (Figure 8) indicates a sharpened programmatic focus, provides a common framework for collaboration at national level, and supports resource mobilization efforts. Of note is the FPI on "prevention of violence against women and access to essential services", which was adopted by 30 country offices.

Figure 10.

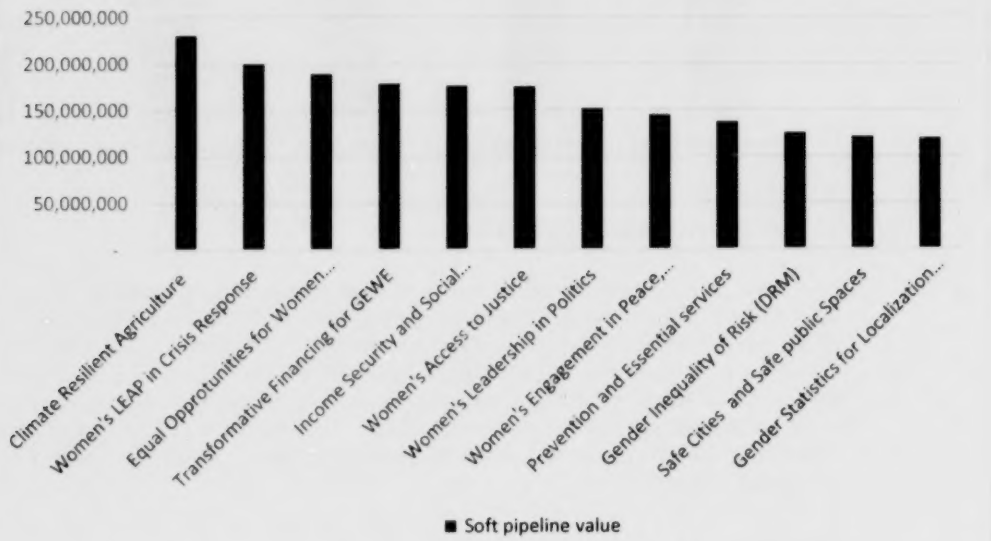


71. Recognizing the value of FPIs as an instrument to drive transformative change through partnerships, they have become the main programme modality in the new Strategic Plan with each output and its corresponding theory of change linked to an FPI. Contrary to UN-Women stand-alone projects, FPIs must take place within a

UN-wide programmatic framework (UN Flagship initiatives, UNDAF common working area, etc.) and most of them are expected to be implemented as a joint programme.

72. As figure 11 shows, UN-Women has rapidly grown its pipeline to fund the FPIs in a balanced manner. A key challenge will be to capitalize each FPI in a balanced manner in the next two years.

Figure 11.



III. Assessment of organizational effectiveness and efficiency

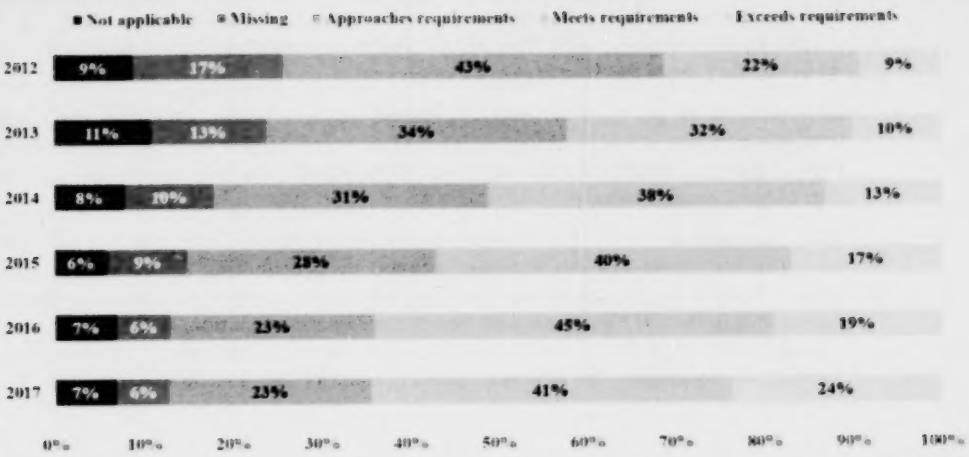
73. Over the course of the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan, UN-Women made significant progress in organizational performance with 26 out of 39 targets achieved. UN coordination, partnerships, advocacy, communications and the knowledge-hub and evaluation functions continued to support development results. In 2017, UN-Women also continued to implement the strategic initiatives from the midterm review of the Strategic Plan to further improve operational effectiveness in the areas of systems and accountability and human resources.

A. UN Coordination

74. Since 2014, UN-Women's work in leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the UN system has gained increasing traction and contributed to the achievement of results for women and girls.

75. The UN-SWAP evolved into a signature framework emulated by other priorities within the UN and even by Governments. At the end of 2017, more than 94 per cent of all UN entities had reported on the UN-SWAP for six consecutive years, up from 79 per cent in 2012. There has been significant progress against all indicators, with the proportion of ratings meeting or exceeding requirements more than doubling since the first year of reporting (Figure 12).

Figure 12.



76. As a result of increased inter-agency coordination and training by UN-Women, the number of entities meeting requirements in the area of tracking resources for gender equality has more than doubled since 2012, reaching a total of 28.

77. The success of the first UN-SWAP has led to the development of a strengthened second-generation framework rolled out in 2018, with new performance indicators aligned to the SDGs. In the context of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), UN-Women also worked with UNDP to finalize and pilot an updated UNCT-SWAP Scorecard in six UNCTs, strengthening alignment between country and corporate levels.

78. UN-Women's full participation in the Chief Executives Board and its subsidiary bodies supported a stronger inclusion of gender perspectives in the work of Heads of Agencies. Similarly, the Executive Director's participation in the Secretary-General's Executive Committee was conducive to the integration of gender perspectives in the work across the three pillars of the UN.

79. In 2017, UN-Women chaired the UNAIDS Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations, which enabled placing a stronger focus on gender equality within the Joint Programme as it went through the refinement of its operating mode. As a member of the UN's H6 partnership, UN-Women brought a focus to responding to root causes of poor health amongst women, children and adolescents. This contributed to improving women and girls' access to health care services and knowledge about their rights. UN-Women was also selected as the 2018 chair of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

80. Over the 2014–2017 period, UN-Women promoted gender parity in the UN system, culminating in 2017 with the launch of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy for Gender Parity, for which UN-Women played a significant leadership and substantive support role.

81. UN-Women's role in the UNDG grew in importance since 2014. Last year, UN-Women spearheaded and field-tested a gender equality marker methodology for UN Country Teams. UN-Women also led the update of the UNDG Resource book for mainstreaming gender in UN common programming at the country level, and the new UNDG Resource Guide for Gender Theme Groups.

82. At the regional and country level, UN-Women continued to focus on the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, issuing regional specific guidance notes on the localization of the SDGs and contributing to the development of regional roadmaps. UN-Women, with UN-ESCAP, led the regional review of SDG 5 at the Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development.

83. Overall, 70 per cent of UNDAFs feature gender-specific results in 2017. All joint programmes are reported to address SDG 5 and 56 per cent have an explicit focus on gender equality, an increase from 2016 when it was the case for only 29 per cent of joint programmes.

84. Throughout 2017, UN-Women provided inputs to the process on the repositioning of the UN development system, by contributing to discussions and reports. It built on lessons learned from its UN coordination work, including those highlighted in the 2016 evaluation of the UN coordination function, to inform the new Strategic Plan 2018–2021, which highlights system-wide coherence and leveraging interagency synergies to advance gender equality as essential strategies for UN-Women.

B. Partnerships

85. Through 2014–2017, UN-Women has grown the number and enhanced the quality of strategic partnerships, with a focus on galvanizing support for gender equality and women's empowerment, supporting the inclusion of diverse groups, as well as engaging a broad range of actors to become allies.

86. In recognition of the vital role played by women's organizations, UN-Women continued its support to the women's movement. This was done by steadily expanding Civil Society Advisory Groups (CSAGs) at the global, regional and national levels and by providing platforms to amplify the voices of women's groups at all levels. In 2017 alone, 14 CSAGS were renewed or established. In line with its universal mandate, UN-Women also strengthened partnerships with civil society partners in Canada, Denmark and the United States, among others, in addition to expanding South-South collaboration opportunities among civil society.

87. UN-Women expanded support amongst key groups by fostering diversity and inspiring joint action through inclusion of men and boys, youth, faith and disability rights activists, indigenous leaders, trade union leaders and other key constituencies in CSAGs and in UN-Women's broader outreach. At the 61st CSW session, UN-Women convened dialogues between faith actors and men and boys on transforming discriminatory norms and gender stereotypes.

88. These broad-based coalitions of support have been key for UN-Women's advocacy. Launched in 2017, the Equal Pay Champions Platform and Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) already resulted in increased Government commitments to ensure equal pay for work of equal value. UN-Women's partnership with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom increased the focus on women's meaningful participating in peace.

89. Since its launch in 2014, HeForShe has engaged 1.3 million men and boys to make commitments to gender equality. The IMPACT 10x10x10 leveraged the initiative's momentum to get concrete commitments from Heads of State, CEOs and University Presidents to make a difference in their sectors. Private sector IMPACT champions agreed to publish on a yearly basis the gender parity data of their company, a significant step to increase transparency and drive change. The Sussex Police and Danone joined the Prime Minister of Canada as HeForShe Thematic Champions to support action in their specific sectors.

90. UN-Women also broadened its engagement with the private sector since 2014, growing the number of partnerships from 12 to 38. UN-Women leverages partnerships for joint advocacy and results for women and girls. In 2017, UN-Women supported the launch of the Unstereotype Alliance, an alliance of 26 global corporations committed to using advertising to eliminate harmful stereotypes and promote non-biased portrayals of women and men. The Global Innovation Coalition for Change with 22 partners from diverse sectors was also launched to focus on innovation, technology and entrepreneurship.

91. Through a partnership with Coca-Cola, 9,000 women in South Africa, Egypt and Brazil were reached with business skills, leadership training, and access to financial assets. UN-Women and Unilever are working to increase the safety of women working across the supply chain, impacting up to 30,000 women. UN-Women's collaboration with the International Olympic Committee was strengthened with a focus on increasing the number of countries empowering disadvantaged girls through sports.

C. Advocacy and communications

92. UN-Women's communications results since 2014 have far exceeded set targets, contributing to increased public awareness of gender equality issues and increased visibility of UN-Women. In 2017, 23,500 media reports featured UN-Women. As part of the "Step It Up Media Compact", more than 60 media outlets committed to boosting women's representation in the newsroom and in news content, including *Thomson Reuters*, *France 24*, *The Huffington Post*, and *Deutsche Welle*.

93. Social media followers reached 6.5 million in 2017, a significant increase from 640,000 in 2014. UN-Women rolled out 88 social media accounts around the world in 14 languages, including on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Weibo, Google+, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Pinterest. On Twitter, UN-Women's global English account was listed as number 1 for best interaction in the global Twiplomacy study. The Executive Director became the second most followed global leader on LinkedIn.

94. During International Women's Day and CSW61, media coverage reached 90 countries with 4,000 media reports. During the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women, 4,615 media reports in 97 countries were garnered. UN-Women's hashtags, such as #WomensDay, #CSW61, and #orangetheworld created a potential reach of between 167 million and 1.2 billion users. Posts on the global Facebook pages reached a total of 8.2 million unique users.

95. In 2017, the partnership with WPP helped secure USD 500,000 in pro bono ads for UN-Women on major platforms such as Amazon and Spotify. UN-Women's partnership with Facebook resulted in USD 50,000 of free advertising credits.

96. In 2017, UN-Women won the Shorty Award for its #StopTheRobbery campaign and the Webby Award for Best Activism Website for its timeline "Women's Footprint in History". UN-Women also produced its first photographic exhibition on humanitarian issues titled *Vulnerable to Risk, Vital to Recovery*, at UN Headquarters. UN-Women released its second Virtual Reality film to showcase the story of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

97. UN-Women will continue to expand its efforts and communications channels to increase its public advocacy and enhance its reach, including to new audiences. As the social media landscape continues to evolve, UN-Women will adapt its efforts, driving content and engagement to further boost efforts to positively impact the lives of women and girls.

D. Knowledge hub and South-South cooperation

98. In the period 2014–2017, UN-Women's knowledge hub function has effectively supported development results. Key achievements include the launch of several flagship reports, the growth of gender statistics programmes, increasing participation in gender equality training, and increased commitments as a result of South-South cooperation.

99. Following the successful 2015 launch of Progress of the World's Women, the first regional companion report was launched in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2017, establishing region-specific evidence on women's economic empowerment. In 2017, preparations continued for the next edition of *Progress* with the commissioning of policy-focused background papers and statistical analysis. An evaluation of this flagship report found that the report is widely used, regarded as high quality and positions UN-Women as a global knowledge leader on gender equality and women's empowerment. To further amplify impact, UN-Women will focus on broadening outreach, increasing uptake by key stakeholders and influencing policy processes through the report.

100. A new global monitoring report, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was finalized for launch in early 2018, providing the first comprehensive assessment of the 2030 Agenda from a gender perspective. Other knowledge work expanded, such as a Policy Brief series, with six new papers published in the Discussion Paper series.

101. In 2017, UN-Women developed 51 courses and attracted 52,441 users from 194 different countries on its eLearning Campus. The "I Know Gender" course was completed by over 24,000 people since its launch in 2015. A community of practice on training for gender equality brings together around 1,900 practitioners to share effective approaches to training for gender equality work.

102. UN-Women continued to grow South-South and triangular cooperation, supporting 62 countries. Specific areas of focus include gender-responsive budgeting, gender statistics and increased cooperation on ending violence against women. South-South and triangular cooperation has been identified as a driver of change in the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan. UN-Women is developing a dedicated strategy to scale up and systematize work in this area.

E. Results-based management, transparency, systems and accountability

103. Since 2014, UN-Women has made significant strides in strengthening its results culture, with enhanced Results-Based Management (RBM) standards and capacity amongst staff. An independent regular quality assessment found a positive trend in the quality of planning and reporting, with 80 per cent of all Strategic Notes qualifying as either 'Excellent' or 'Good', and an improvement in the quality of annual reports.

104. The launch of the Result Management System (RMS) has played a key role in strengthening performance management during this Strategic Plan cycle. The RMS has simplified the process of planning, monitoring and reporting and increased efficiency, accountability and transparency. The RMS allowed UN-Women to link results to resources, improving UN-Women's decision-making process around resource allocations. In 2017, UN-Women developed a project module in line with the latest International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standards.

105. UN-Women also continued to strengthen and streamline business processes in 2017, running its information systems and infrastructure in a very cost-effective manner by leveraging cloud technologies while fully achieving the target of 99 per cent availability of systems.

106. The Donor Agreement Management System was recognized in 2017 by the Evaluation of the Regional Architecture as a key efficiency tool, providing staff with relevant information on over 900 signed donor agreements. UN-Women also established a Virtual Global Service Centre to provide decentralized organization-wide services for financial donor reporting. This, along with automated result-based financial donor reports, allows UN-Women to deliver over 2,000 donor reports annually.

107. Other ICT automations for financial management since 2014 include reports for revenue, outstanding partner advances and project delivery reports. These systems have enabled a better integration of programme planning and financial management in the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan.

108. UN-Women received its sixth consecutive unqualified audit opinion from the UN Board of Audit. The implementation rate for external audit recommendations significantly increased to 83 per cent. Similarly, there was an increase in UN-Women's implementation rate for internal audit recommendations, which reached 99 per cent.

109. During the 2014–2017 period, UN-Women made considerable progress in embedding its risk management framework into key business processes and strengthening monitoring processes. UN-Women's corporate risk register has allowed to identify and proactively address significant risks in the implementation of the Strategic Plan and informed the development of the new Plan.

F. Human resources

110. Overall, targets for human resources indicators have been met, as UN-Women continued to support the strategic engagement, deployment and development of a flexible, highly skilled and motivated workforce. By the end of 2017, UN-Women's global workforce had reached 2,250 people, reflecting 15 per cent growth over 3 years, with 76 per cent working in field locations. UN-Women's workforce is comprised of 147 different nationalities and a high percentage of women in leadership positions (80 per cent).

111. Key achievements since 2014 include the development of new job design and recruitment systems to shorten the time to recruit; implementation of strategies to promote internal mobility; and embedded systems for workforce planning and review, including regular workforce surveys.

G. Evaluation

112. At corporate level, the Independent Evaluation Office ensured coverage of key impact areas of the Strategic Plan 2014–2017 by providing a comprehensive assessment of UN-Women's normative support, UN system coordination and operational work. This included completing seven corporate evaluations; four meta-analysis; two corporate joint reviews on gender policies and practices; and 116 decentralized evaluations.

113. In 2017, the level of evaluation reports rated satisfactory and above has stabilized at 100 per cent, while reporting on use of evaluative evidence reached 86 per cent.

H. Resource mobilization

114. UN-Women has achieved impressive growth over the last four years. In 2017, UN-Women's revenue reached USD 369 million, its highest total revenue since inception.

115. There has been particularly strong growth in other resources, which reached USD 214.2 million, a 20 per cent increase since 2016 and a 10 per cent annual growth since 2014. USD 28.3 million was directly channelled to FPIs, providing soft-earmarked resources to UN-Women.

116. While resources have increased, they still fall below Integrated Budget targets. UN-Women continues to work with all donors to prioritize funding to regular resources, in line with the QCPR guidance.

117. Member States continue to provide over 80 per cent of UN-Women's funding, with 112 Governments contributing. Private sector contributions from corporations and foundations nearly doubled since 2014 and reached USD 12.3 million in 2017.

118. UN-Women piloted investment funds to five National Committees in 2017 for individual giving programmes. This support contributed to increasing their contributions from USD 1.1 million in 2014 to USD 6.3 million in 2017.

119. Despite improvements, UN-Women's funding continues to be below the ambitions for the Entity. A new resource mobilization strategy will prioritize more diversified overall funding from public and private sectors, including by leveraging innovative sources of financing, such as crowd-funding, digital fundraising, public giving, and engagement with high net-worth individuals.

IV. Conclusions

120. UN-Women supported the achievement of far-reaching and transformative results for women and girls between 2014 and 2017. Two billion women and girls now live in countries with better policies for women's economic empowerment and 1.5 billion women and girls are better protected from violence through stronger legal frameworks. Yet, accelerating and sustaining change remains a challenge. Creating an enabling environment for the achievement of substantive equality continues to be a critical strategy.

121. Since its inception, UN-Women has invested significant efforts in building strong partnerships with the UN system, women's organizations and with other key actors in support of its mandate. Whether it is through Flagship Programming Initiatives, broadening support to new constituencies, or enhanced South-South and triangular cooperation, this impact-focused collaboration has become a centrepiece of the new Strategic Plan 2018–2021. It aligns with Member States' requests for the repositioning of the UN Development System.

122. UN-Women's work for gender equality and women's empowerment takes place in a complex environment. Global visibility for gender equality and women's rights is higher than ever before, but this only represents one step towards transformative change. Transforming the structures that underpin gender inequality requires political will, the right policies, time, resources, and a systematic engagement.

123. This is particularly true for women and girls experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, to respond to the 2030 Agenda's call to leave no one behind. UN-Women is further sharpening measurement of its results to make sure that its programming benefits those who most need it.

124. The gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda represents an unmissable opportunity to bring about transformative change for women and girls. To support Member States and key partners in implementation, UN-Women will build on the assets it has developed in the last four years. The greater integration and synergies that UN-Women has gradually built between its normative support, UN coordination and operational activities are now a standard feature of UN-Women's programming. This is complemented by UN-Women's knowledge leadership, as the entity with the largest knowledge pool on gender equality and women's empowerment. The new Strategic Plan explicitly builds on these and other comparative advantages in support of results.

125. While UN-Women has significantly grown in resources and influence over the last four years, additional investments are required for the Entity to deliver against the ambitions that drove its creation. This includes ensuring that UN-Women has meaningful country presence as part of UN country teams, as well as the means to support the rest of the UN system to coherently step up its efforts for gender equality and women's empowerment.

126. Toward this end, UN-Women looks forward to continuing its strong collaboration with Member States and the Executive Board to fully implement its Strategic Plan and deliver new transformative results for women and girls by 2021.

V. Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to:

(a) Take note of the Annual Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014–2017;

(b) Welcome the progress made since 2014 and achievements as described in the report;

(c) Commend UN-Women on a strong performance to date; and

(d) Encourage UN-Women to continue using lessons from the Strategic Plan 2014–2017 in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021.

United Nations UNW/2018/3

Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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Annual session of 2018
19 and 20 June 2018
Item 5 of the provisional agenda
Audit matters

Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017

Summary

This report presents information on the internal audit and investigation functions carried out for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017. The UN-Women internal audit and investigation functions have been carried out under a Service Level Agreement between UN-Women and the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since March of 2012. A new Service Level Agreement was signed on 18 December 2015, extending the provision of services for an additional two years. The internal audit function is performed by the dedicated UN-Women Audit Unit of OAI in accordance with the financial regulations and rules of UN-Women (UNW/2012/6, annex I). The investigation function is carried out by OAI's Investigations Section. Information on the actions taken and management's response to the present report are set out in the annex to this report, which is also available on the UN-Women website. As requested by the Executive Board in its decision UNW/2015/11, this report includes (a) an opinion, based on the scope of work undertaken, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the organization's framework of governance, risk management and control; (b) a concise summary of work and the criteria that support the opinion; (c) a statement of conformance with the internal audit standards being adhered to; and (d) a view on whether the resourcing of the function is appropriate, sufficient and effectively deployed to achieve the desired internal audit coverage.

The Executive Board may wish to (a) take note of the present report, (b) express its continuing support for the strengthening of the capacity of the internal audit and investigations functions, and (c) take note of the report of the Audit Advisory Committee.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a description of the internal audit and investigation functions in UN-Women and the related activities for the year ended 31 December 2017. It includes information regarding the main results of the audit reports issued in 2017 and the status of management's efforts to implement the audit recommendations made in the current and prior years' reports. Information is also presented relating to investigation activities in 2017.

II. Assurance

2. To maximize the level of assurance provided with regard to governance, risk management and internal controls, with the resources available, the audits conducted by the UN-Women Audit Unit continue to be focused on those areas of governance, management and operations assessed as posing a high level of financial, reputational, legal and functional risk to UN-Women and to the achievement of its goals. In 2017, the UN-Women Audit Unit continued to expand its audit coverage through the inclusion of financial audits of projects implemented under the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) in its audit portfolio. Subsequent to endorsement by the Audit Advisory Committee, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director approved the 2017 annual work plan.

3. Throughout 2017, OAI continued to be operationally independent of the management of UN-Women and exercised freedom in determining the scope of its audits and investigations in accordance with applicable international and generally accepted standards.

A. Mandate

4. In response to the biennial Service Level Agreement between OAI and UN-Women, a dedicated UN-Women Audit Unit (the Unit) was created in March of 2012, as a unit within OAI. A new biennial Service Level Agreement for audit and investigations was signed on 18 December 2015. OAI continued to provide investigation services on a reimbursable basis.

5. OAI confirms to the Executive Board that audits are performed in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing and the Code of Ethics established by the Institute of Internal Auditors. In keeping with those standards, the work of the UN-Women Audit Unit is subject to rigorous review by the Quality Assurance and Policy Unit of OAI. Further, the UN-Women Audit Unit was part of the OAI's External Quality Assessment (EQA) that was performed by the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) as required by the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing ("Standards"). The overall opinion indicated that OAI generally conforms to the Standards and the IIA Code of Ethics. This conformance demonstrates a clear intent and commitment to achieving the Core Principles for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing ("Core Principles") and the Definition of Internal Auditing.

B. Independent external oversight

6. In 2017, the Audit Advisory Committee reviewed the 2017 annual work plan for the UN-Women Audit Unit and monitored its implementation through quarterly progress reports and meetings with the Director of OAI and the Officer-In-Charge of

the Unit. In addition, the Committee reviewed and provided comments on the draft annual report for 2017 (UNW/2017/3).

7. The UN-Women Audit Unit also communicated its annual work plan to the United Nations Board of Auditors to promote coordination and efficiency.

C. Risk-based audit planning and completion of annual work plan

8. The 2017 audit plan was formulated after conducting UN-Women field offices risk assessment and after obtaining the input of senior management, divisions and other stakeholders. The planning process included the systematic analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in order to assess the financial, reputational, legal and functional risks relating to each of the auditable offices and units.

9. The audit plan was reviewed by the Audit Advisory Committee on 16 November 2016 before its submission to and approval by the Under-Secretary-General/ Executive Director, in December 2016.

10. The fieldwork for all audits included in the 2017 plan was completed as scheduled during 2017. The corresponding audit reports were also issued during 2017, except for the reports relating to the audit of the UN-Women country office in Iraq and Resource Mobilization. The field work for both the Iraq and Resource Mobilization audits were completed in November 2017 and the reports were issued in January and February 2018.

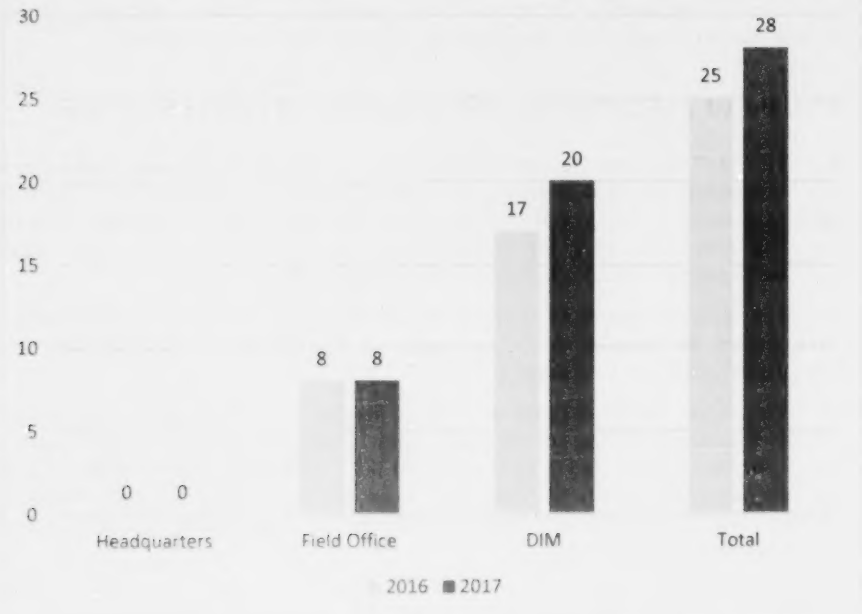
D. Audit reports issued

11. Audit reports for eight field-based offices and 20 DIM projects were issued in 2017. In accordance with decision 2013/4, annex I presents the titles of all internal audit reports issued in 2017 and their ratings.

12. All UN-Women reports issued since 2012 are available on the UN-Women audit disclosure website at http://audit-public-disclosure.unwomen.org

13. The audit reports issued in 2017 generally covered programmatic and operational activities carried out by UN-Women in 2016, meaning that the results generally reflect the status of programmes and operations during 2016. The audits covered the programmatic and operational activities of the UN-Women offices or units and represented combined expenditures of approximately $51.9 million, or 15.2 per cent of the total expenditure of $340.04 million reported by UN-Women in its financial report for 2016 (A/72/5/Add.12). The reports issued during 2017 also included two follow-up audit reports.

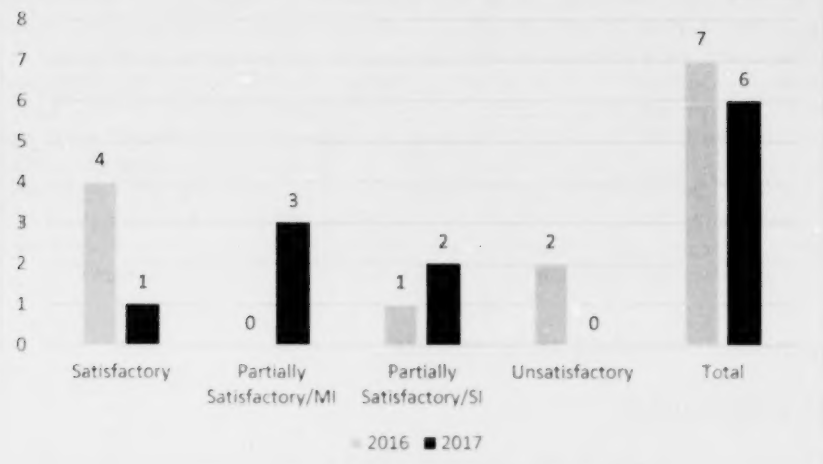
Figure I
Number and type of audit reports issued in 2016–2017



E. Audit ratings

14. For the full scope audits of offices, units and functions (excluding DIM project audits), the UN-Women Audit Unit assigned an overall audit rating of satisfactory, partially satisfactory/some improvements needed, partially satisfactory/major improvements needed or unsatisfactory based on its assessment of the governance, risk management and control processes. For the six full scope audits issued in 2017, three (50 per cent) were assessed as partially satisfactory/major improvement needed meaning that the assessed governance, risk management practices and controls needed major improvement. Two offices (33 per cent) were rated as partially satisfactory/some improvement needed, meaning that the assessed governance, risk management practices and controls were generally established and functioning but needed some improvement. The remaining office (17 per cent) was assessed as satisfactory, with no issues identified that might significantly affect the achievement of its objectives. Figure II provides a comparison of the audit ratings.

Figure II
Comparison of audit ratings for 2016 and 2017[1]



III. Disclosure of internal audit reports

15. All audit reports issued in 2017 were publicly disclosed in accordance with Executive Board decision 2012/10 (see UNW/2012/16). All reports are subject to OAI's internal due diligence and quality assurance processes prior to issuance to management and the Member States concerned. Thirty days after issuance, all internal audit reports are publicly disclosed through posting to the UN-Women public website at http://audit-public-disclosure.unwomen.org. Of the 28 reports issued in 2017, OAI partially redacted four audit reports as they contained sensitive information regarding either the country office's safety security readiness or its information and communications technology infrastructure. No requests were received from any organization or Member State requesting redaction of audit reports.

IV. Staffing and budget

16. In 2017, UN-Women Audit Unit resources remained fully funded with four approved posts: one P-5 (Chief), two P-4, and one P-3.

17. The UN-Women Audit Unit had an overall budget of $2.08 million, representing an increase of approximately $0.38 (22 per cent) million compared with the 2016 budget. The increase also includes $0.28 million relating to the cost of investigation services. In an effort to minimize the cost of investigations services, a P3 Investigator post had been included, bringing the investigations services total budget to $291,059 (staff and GOE). The audit and investigations expenditure amounted to $1.48 million, which indicates under-utilization of funding made available by 29 per cent, which was mainly attributable to the reduction in expenditure on hiring of consultants for both the resource mobilization and headquarters risk assessment exercises and the postponed hiring for the P3 Investigator post.

[1] A four-tier audit rating was introduced in January 2017 that resulted in the splitting of the partially satisfactory rating into two categories of partially satisfactory/MI and partially satisfactory/SI.

Decision 2015/4 implications on audit and investigations resources

18. The Executive Board's decision No. 2015/4 requires OAI to indicate whether, in its view, the resourcing of the internal audit and investigation function is appropriate, sufficient, and effectively deployed to achieve the desired audit coverage. The audit coverage in 2017 was 15.2 per cent and was below what OAI considers a suitable level of coverage. During the course of 2017, OAI and UN-Women management mutually agreed to discontinue the Service Level Agreement with the intent of UN-Women establishing its own internal audit and investigations function from 1 January 2018. The Service Level Agreement came to an end on 17 December 2017 and an addendum was signed extending the agreement by three months ending on 31 March 2018. The addendum was done to support and oversee the completion of remaining tasks from the 2017 Annual Work Plan as well as to support smooth transition of the internal audit function to UN-Women.

V. Significant internal audit results

A. Field office audits

19. In 2017, OAI issued eight reports corresponding to the field office audits of five country offices, one regional office and two follow-up audits of one country office and one regional office. In total, those audits resulted in 36 recommendations, of which 9 (25 per cent) were corporate in nature, and related to:

- policy and guidance on managing micro-grants.
- processes for internal structuring and management.
- the oversight role of regional offices.
- criteria related to diversions from regional architecture.
- strategy for managing senior management vacancies.
- criteria and guidance on implementation of infrastructure projects.
- communicating procedures, policies and rules on joint programming.

20. As in previous years, the UN-Women Audit Unit noted recurring issues in some areas. Specifically delays in strategizing and initiating mobilization of funds (one office), inadequate project monitoring and oversight (two offices) and weaknesses in asset management (three offices).

21. Of the 36 field office audit recommendations issued in 2017, 12 were rated as high priority, requiring prompt action from management to ensure that UN-Women was not exposed to high risks. Figure III indicates the distribution and prioritization of all field office recommendations issued in 2017.

Figure III
Distribution and prioritization of field office audit recommendations

Note: Figure III does not include one audit recommendation that was withdrawn.

B. Project audits

22. In 2017, OAI continued the process initiated in 2015 for conducting financial audits of projects implemented directly by UN-Women, which are referred to as the Direct Implementation Modality, or DIM, project audits.

23. According to OAI's mandate, DIM projects may be reviewed as part of the audit of a country office or other business unit or may be audited separately through an external supplier managed by the unit.

24. In 2017, reports were issued for 20 DIM audits. For the 20 DIM audits included in the 2017 work plan, all reports were issued prior to 30 September 2017. The combined audited expenditure for the 20 reports issued in 2017 was $23.4 million.

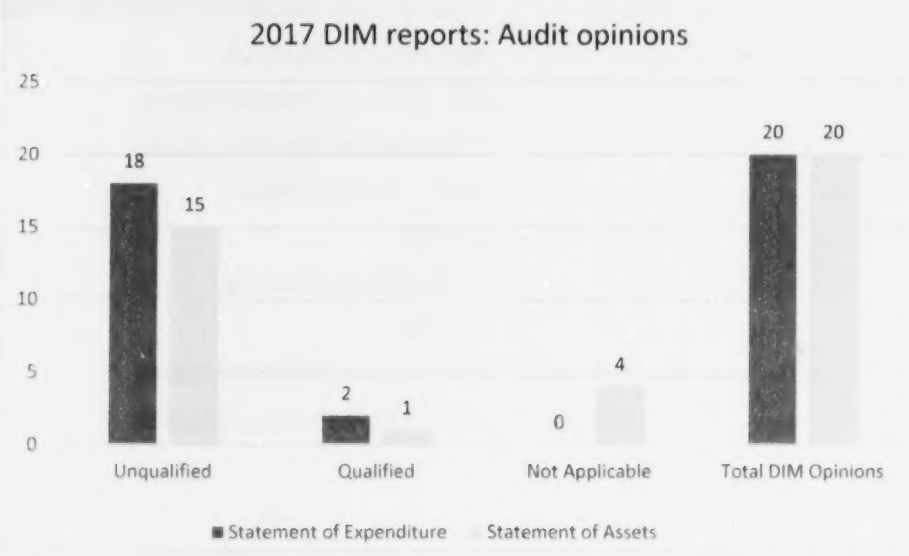
25. Deficiencies in the procurement processes and practices were noted in 16 recommendations (80 per cent) of the 2017 DIM project audit recommendations.

26. Five (25 per cent) of the 20 recommendations were rated high priority, and the remaining 15 (75 per cent) were rated medium priority.

27. DIM audits are financial in nature, providing assurance on the expenditures charged to the project over a defined period and on assets recorded against the project at a defined point in time. The external supplier provides an "opinion" on the statement of expenditures and a separate opinion on the statement of assets for the project, if applicable. The auditor shall express an adverse opinion when, having obtained sufficient appropriate audit evidence, the auditor concludes that

misstatements, individually or in the aggregate, are both material and pervasive to the financial statements. Two DIM projects had received qualified opinions on the project expenditures while one other DIM project had received a qualified opinion on the project assets.

Figure IV
Audit opinions, DIM reports issued in 2017



VI. Follow-up on audit recommendations

23. The overall implementation rate of audit recommendations was 99 per cent as at 31 December 2017, which was 9 per cent higher than the performance target of 90 per cent set by UN-Women. This indicated substantive action by management on the audit issues raised and recommendations made. This calculation is based on the analysis of all reports issued by OAI from 1 January 2015 to 30 November 2017. There were no recommendations that had not been fully implemented for more than 18 months.

24. As at 31 December 2017, 30 of the 56 recommendations made in 2017 had been fully implemented, 19 were in the process of being implemented, six were not implemented and one recommendation was withdrawn. Of the 25 outstanding recommendations, six (24 per cent) were rated high priority.

VII. Advisory services

25. The UN-Women Audit Unit continued to respond to requests for advice, information and detailed inputs received from UN-Women managers at headquarters and field offices. The advice covered a range of topics, including engagement and selection of civil society organizations, structure and operations of the Civil Society Advisory Group that works closely with a field office, review of the Travel Chapter of the UN-Women Programme and Operations Manual, donor requests for information, changes to donor agreements and donor reporting requirements and retrieving project status/management data from Atlas. Advisory services were also

provided to headquarters with respect to the establishment of the in-house internal audit function of UN-Women.

VIII. Investigations

26. In accordance with a service-level agreement, OAI provides investigation services covering allegations of fraud, corruption and other wrongdoing, including workplace harassment, abuse of authority and retaliation against whistle-blowers, allegedly committed by UN-Women staff members, non-staff personnel and contractors.

A. Caseload

27. In 2017, OAI opened 17 new cases for UN-Women compared with 41 in 2016. OAI also carried over 26 cases from 2016, bringing the total caseload in 2017 to 43, a 16 per cent decrease over the total caseload in 2016 (51 cases), as shown in Figure V.

Figure V
Caseload in 2016 and 2017

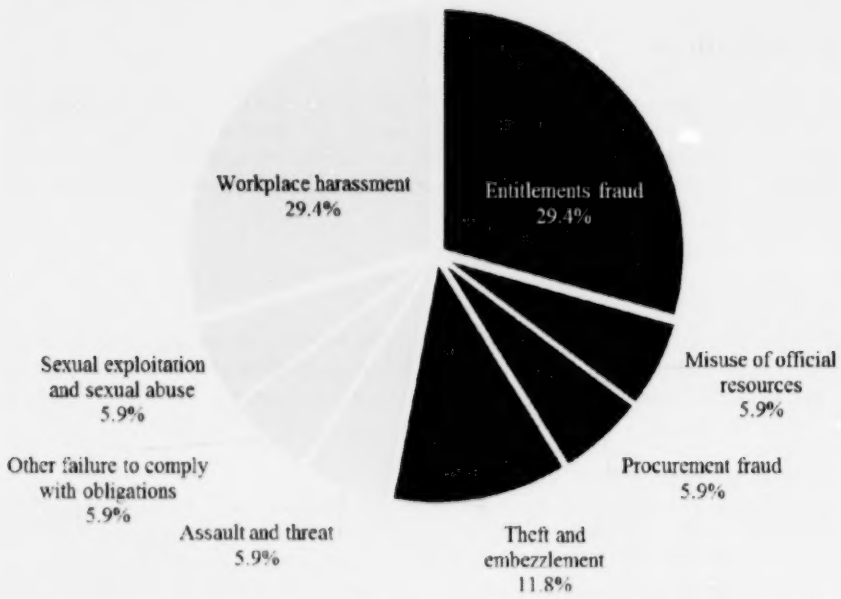
Caseload	2016	2017
Carry-over as at 1 January	10	26
Intake during the year	41	17
Total	**51**	**43**
Closed (from cases carried over)	5	21
Closed (from intake)	20	12
Total	**25**	**33**
Carried over as at 31 December	26	10

B. Types of complaint

28. The 17 complaints received during 2017 are detailed in Figure V. Complaints relating to entitlements fraud and workplace harassment formed the highest categories of complaints received in 2017, with 29.4 per cent each.

29. Complaints relating to financial irregularities comprised of entitlements fraud (5); theft and embezzlement (2); procurement fraud (1); and misuse of official resources (1) constituted 53 per cent of all cases received by OAI in 2017. This was a 14-percentage point increase compared to the percentage of complaints received in the same categories in 2016 (39 per cent).

Figure VI
Case intake by category 2017



30. Geographically, the 17 cases received in 2017 were from Sub Saharan Africa (8) [comprised of — Eastern and Southern Africa (4), Western and Central Africa (4)]; Europe and Central Asia (5); Headquarters (3); and Americas and the Caribbean (1).

C. Cases resolved/closed

31. OAI closed 33 cases in 2017, 16 after a preliminary assessment (compared to 15 in 2016) owing to insufficient evidence of wrongdoing to justify an investigation or because an investigation was not warranted and 17 after investigation (compared to 10 in 2016).

32. Of the 17 cases closed after investigation, seven cases resulted in an investigation report, five cases resulted in a closure note, three cases resulted in a closure report and two cases resulted in a management letter.

33. Six cases that resulted in an investigation report were transmitted to the Division of Management and Administration pursuant to the requirements of the UN-Women Legal Framework for addressing Non-Compliance with United Nations Standards of Conduct. One case was submitted to the relevant business unit for review and consideration of disciplinary or administrative proceedings.

34. The seven substantiated cases involved five contractors (service contract holders) and two staff members. The two staff members resigned while the investigation was still ongoing.

35. Figure VII sets out the disposition of cases in 2016 and 2017.

Figure VII
Disposition of cases in 2016 and 2017

Action taken	Cases in 2016	Cases in 2017
After preliminary assessment		
Closed (investigation not warranted)	15	16
Subtotal	**15**	**16**
After investigation		
Closed (not substantiated)	8	10
Closed (substantiated — submitted to UN-Women management)	2	7
Subtotal	**10**	**17**
Total	**25**	**33**
Investigation reports issued	2	7

D. Financial loss

36. OAI identified a financial loss of $6,300 to UN-Women in relation to one case reported and investigated in 2017. This amount was recovered in full.

E. Cases carried forward

37. At the end of 2017, OAI had 10 open cases for UN-Women, of which four were at the assessment stage and six were under investigation.

IX. Opinion *(decision 2015/4)*

38. The management of UN-Women is responsible for maintaining the adequacy and effectiveness of UN-Women's governance, risk management and control. In accordance with UN-Women's oversight policy as part of UN-Women's accountability framework and Financial Rules and Regulations (UNW/2012/6), the United Nations Board of Auditors provides independent external oversight through, among other things, audits of UN-Women's financial statements and related financial procedures, the accounting system, internal financial controls and administration and management of UN-Women in general. The primary objective of the work performed by the United Nations Board of Auditors is to express an opinion on UN-Women's financial statements and is different from the objective of the work carried out by OAI.

39. OAI provides, under a Service Level Agreement, independent internal oversight through investigations and internal audits on the adequacy and effectiveness of UN-Women's governance, risk management and control framework. OAI's opinion is based on the audit reports issued between 1 January and 31 December 2017. A concise summary of the audit work that supports the opinion is included in section V of this report and the supporting criteria is described in annex III.

40. The audit recommendation implementation ratio as at 31 December 2017 of 99 per cent, which is above the corporate target set by UN-Women, demonstrates management's commitment to reducing and managing risk and provides assurance that appropriate and timely action is taken, as and when improvements in the governance, risk and control are necessary.

41. In OAI's opinion, based on the scope of work undertaken, the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and control in the audits issued in 2017 were in aggregate satisfactory, which means that they were generally established and functioning well. OAI would like to add the following: (a) the Executive Board should note that the opinion is based on audit coverage of 15.2 per cent of the 2016 expenditures of UN-Women; and (b) 16 per cent of all audit recommendations were corporate in nature relating to UN-Women policy guidance and corporate support.

Annex I

Office of Audit and Investigations audit reports issued in 2017 pertaining to UN-Women

	Audit Type	Report No.	Audit Subjects	Rating[2]
Field-based Regional and Country Offices				
			East and South Africa	
1	General scope	1781	UN-Women Country Office in Burundi	Partially satisfactory
2	DIM projects	1869	UNW South Sudan Project 81114 — Promoting Women's Participation	N/A
3		1870	UNW South Sudan Project 94751 — Responding to Emergency Needs	N/A
			Western and Central Africa	
4	General scope	1614	UN-Women Country Office in Liberia	Partially satisfactory
5	Follow up	1778	UNW Regional Office for West and Central Africa	N/A
6	DIM project	1873	UNW Mali Project 84608 — Femmes et Consolidation	N/A
7		1874	UNW Mali Project 88743 — Prise en Charge des Femmes	N/A
8		1875	UNW DRC Project 96312 — Appui aux Droits et Participation	N/A
9		1876	UNW DRC Project 99819 — Multisectoral Emergency	N/A
			Europe and Central Asia	
10	General scope	1774	UN-Women Country Office in Moldova	Satisfactory
11		1779	UNW Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia	Partially satisfactory
			Asia and the Pacific	
12	General scope	1776	UN-Women Country Office in Bangladesh	Partially satisfactory
13	Follow up	1777	UN-Women Country Office in Papua New Guinea	Unsatisfactory
14	DIM projects	1857	UNW Fiji MCO Project 70261 — Pacific EVAW Facility Fund	N/A
15		1858	UNW Fiji MCO Project 89127 — Markets for Change	N/A
16		1859	UNW Afghanistan Project 89140 — ACO EVAW Italy	N/A
17		1860	UNW Afghanistan Project 89141 — EVAW Korea	N/A
18		1861	UNW Afghanistan Project 91949 — ACO EVAW	N/A
19		1862	UNW Afghanistan Project 91906 — PEEP Economic Empowerment	N/A

[2] In view of the nature of the audit or the limited audit scope, the following audits do not have an audit rating: DIM financial audits and follow-up audits.

	Audit Type	Report No.	Audit Subjects	Rating[2]
			Arab States	
20	DIM projects	1863	UNW Jordan Project 93655 — Eid by Eid	N/A
21		1864	UNW Jordan Project 96450 — Promoting Social Cohesion	N/A
22		1865	UNW Regional Office of the Arab States Project 84413 — EC Regional Programme	N/A
23		1866	UNW Regional Office of the Arab States Project 93314 — Women for Women & Men for Women	N/A
24		1867	UNW OPT Project 84416 — EC Regional Programme OPT WP	N/A
25		1868	UNW OPT Project 91096 — Strengthening Rule of Law	N/A
			Latin America and Caribbean	
26	General scope	1775	UN-Women Country Office in Guatemala	Partially satisfactory
27	DIM projects	1871	UNW Colombia Project 91845 — Women's Citizenship for Peace	N/A
28		1872	UNW Colombia Project 93258 — Overcoming GBV to Ensure Women's Full Enjoyment of Rights	N/A

DIM=directly-implemented projects

Annex II

Description of criteria that support OAI's opinion

1. In accordance with Executive Board decisions 2015/4 of June 2015, the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) provided an opinion in this Annual Report, based on the scope of work undertaken, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the audited framework of governance, risk management and control (GRC). The summary of the audit work performed is provided in the body of the audit report, under section V. This annex is to provide a brief description of the criteria used to support OAI's opinion.

2. The implementation rate of internal audit recommendations is taken into consideration and compared to the UN-Women target of 90 per cent overall implementation rate. The actual implementation rate of internal audit recommendations at the end of 2017 is 99 per cent and is therefore satisfactory when compared to the UN-Women target.

3. The results of the following audits are also taken into account to support OAI's opinion:

(a) Audits of UN-Women country offices

(b) Audits of UN-Women headquarters functions or units; and

(c) Audits of UN-Women DIM projects

(d) The implementation rate for internal audit recommendations, including long outstanding recommendations; and

(e) Management Letters relating to investigations

4. The distribution of 2017 audit results regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and control at the audited entity level is shown in Figures I and II in document 2018/3, which shows the distribution of the number of audit reports that were issued by OAI in 2017 by type of audit rating: 'satisfactory', 'partially satisfactory/some improvement needed' 'partially satisfactory/major improvement needed' and 'unsatisfactory'.

5. In addition, the audit results are aggregated using the amount of expenditure covered by the audits undertaken in 2017. The result of this aggregation is then grouped by the four levels of audit rating mentioned above.

Table 1
Distribution of ratings per audited expenditure (excluding DIMs)

Rating	Audited expenditure $	Distribution %
Satisfactory	2,052,772	8.46
Partially satisfactory/Some improvement needed	10,246,039	42.25
Partially satisfactory/Major improvement needed	11,952,705	49.29
Unsatisfactory	Nil	Nil
Total	24,251,516	**100**

6. Adjustments were made in the aggregation of expenditure for the directly implemented projects (DIM) because the scope of the DIM financial audits focuses on a financial certification of expenditure and, therefore, these audits do not directly

assess the governance risk management and control (GRC) aspects of a project in UN-Women. Nonetheless, they do provide indirect comfort about the UN-Women GRC. OAI converted the audit opinions rendered into OAI ratings using defined criteria[3] and estimated the results of the DIM financial audits give a 50 per cent assurance about UN-Women GRC.

Table 2:
Distribution of ratings per DIM audited expenditure (weighted at 50 per cent)

Rating	DIM audited expenditure $	Distribution (%)
Satisfactory	10,428,115	89.14
Partially satisfactory/Some improvement needed[3]	Nil	Nil
Partially satisfactory/Major improvement needed[3]	1,270,119	10.86
Unsatisfactory	Nil	0
Total	**11,698,234**	**100**

7. This leads to two different distributions by audit rating, one presented by number of audit reports issued and the second by the amount of expenditure covered by the audits.

8. The distribution of audit ratings for 2017 is as follows:

Table 3:
Comparison of distribution of audit ratings by audited expenditure and by number of audit reports issued in 2017

Rating	By Audited expenditure (combined CO, RO, HQ, DIM)	By number of Audit Reports issued (Rated by OAI) *
	(a)	(b)
Satisfactory	34.7%	67.9%
Partially satisfactory/Some improvement needed	28.5%	7.1%
Partially satisfactory/Major improvement needed	36.8%	17.9%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%
Follow-up Audits (unrated)	N/a	7.1%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

9. OAI has split the 'partially satisfactory' rating level into two categories so that it is fully aligned with the four levels of ratings that OAI implemented in 2017. For the distribution based on audited expenditure, the combined share of 'satisfactory' and 'partially satisfactory/some improvement needed', account for 63.2 per cent of

[3] Net Financial Misstatement (NFM) (%) converted to OAI Rating
– Unqualified or Qualified and NFM is less < 1% = Satisfactory
– Qualified and NFM is from 1%–1.5% = Partially satisfactory/Some improvement needed
– Qualified and NFM is from 1.6%–2% = Partially satisfactory/Major improvement needed
– Qualified and NFM is > 2% or Adverse/Disclaimer Opinion = Unsatisfactory

the audited expenditures. There were no audit reports that were issued with 'unsatisfactory' rating in 2017.

10. Consequently, based on the scope of work undertaken in 2017, in OAI's opinion, the adequacy and effectiveness of the Entity's framework of governance, risk management and control (GRC) were 'satisfactory', which means that in the majority of entities audited in 2017, they were adequately established and functioning well and identified issues, if any, will not significantly affect the business unit's or project's ability to achieve its targets.

Annex III

Summary of substantiated investigation cases in 2017, by type of allegation

	Location	Allegation	Estimated loss to UN-Women[4]	Report sent to	Status
Entitlements Fraud					
1	Africa	Service contractor submitted fraudulent claims for reimbursement of medical expenses.	No financial loss to the organization.	DMA	Subject's contract was terminated.
2	Europe and the CIS	Staff member submitted fraudulent claims for reimbursement of medical expenses.	$6,300 (recovered)	DMA	Staff member resigned.
3		Service contractor submitted fraudulent claims for reimbursement of medical expenses.	No financial loss to the organization.	DMA	Subject's contract was terminated.
Misrepresentation, Forgery, and False Certification					
4	Africa	Staff member misrepresented education qualifications in their CV and P-11 application form.	No financial loss to the organization.	DMA	Staff member resigned.
5	Europe and the CIS	Service contractor forged the signature of a supervisor.	No financial loss to the organization.	DMA	Subject's contract expired before the investigation was complete. Subject has been informed that they can no longer be considered for a position with UN-Women.
Procurement Fraud					
6	Europe and the CIS	Service contractor failed to disclose conflict of interest whilst repeatedly awarding to a relative.	No financial loss to the organization.	DMA	Subject's contract was terminated.

[4] Only losses to UN-Women have been added to this Annex. Losses to other UN agencies in cases of staff members and non-staff personnel from other agencies administered by UN-Women as well as losses to other entities such as CIGNA are not considered financial losses to UN-Women.

	Location	Allegation	Estimated loss to UN-Women[4]	Report sent to	Status
Workplace Harassment					
7	Africa	Service contractor sexually harassed his supervisee.	No financial loss to the organization.	CO	Subject's contract was terminated.

United Nations UNW/2018/3/Add.1

Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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Annual session of 2018
19 and 20 June 2018
Item 5 of the provisional agenda
Audit matters

Report of the Audit Advisory Committee for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to item 29 of the terms of reference of the Audit Advisory Committee (AAC), the sixth report of the Committee to the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) provides a summary of the activities undertaken and the advice given by the AAC in 2017. The present report is made available to the Executive Board, and upon request, the Chair presents the report to the Board.

Background

2. In May 2012, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women approved the original terms of reference of an oversight committee, to be known as the AAC. The terms of reference may be modified from time to time, as necessary. In January 2017, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director approved revised terms of reference, which are available from www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/accountability/audit.

3. Item 1 of the terms of reference describes the Committee as having been established to provide the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director with independent, external advice based on good practice regarding the organization's accountability framework and systems, including risk management. The Committee assists the Head of the Entity in fulfilling her oversight responsibilities in accordance with relevant best practices. The Committee has an advisory role and is not a governance body; no language or clauses in the terms of reference are intended to imply otherwise.

4. In September 2012, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director formally constituted the AAC to enhance accountability and "promote proper governance and high ethical standards, as well as the adoption and use by management of best practices in risk and financial management" within UN Women, in accordance with item 2 of the terms of reference.

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5. As at 31 December 2017, the Committee comprised five members, as contemplated by its terms of reference. Those members are William Fowler (United States of America); Patricia Francis (Jamaica); Elizabeth MacRae (Canada); Yuen Teen Mak (Singapore); and Mary Ann Wyrsch (United States of America). The Committee as a whole is made up of experts in financial reporting and programme matters, accounting, governance, internal audit and investigation, evaluation, external audit, internal control, and risk management practices and principles, and United Nations intergovernmental and normative work and processes.

6. In accordance with items 6 and 7 of the terms of reference, all Committee members are independent of and external to UN-Women. Additionally, Committee members complete an annual confirmation of independence for the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director that assures the transparency of Committee members fulfilling their roles, without compromising any interests.

II. Audit Advisory Committee activities and advice as at 31 December 2017

7. In 2017, the Committee held three face-to-face meetings, from 18 to 20 April, from 18 to 20 July and from 13 to 15 November. UN-Women participants in the meetings included the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director, the two Deputy Executive Directors and relevant representatives of programme and operational senior management. As required, the Committee also met without management present and had separate in-camera meetings with the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director, the Board of Auditors and the Director of the Office of Audit and Investigations of the United Nations Development Programme, which is the Office responsible for the UN-Women Audit Unit. The Committee also met with UN-Women's Legal Officer and representatives of the UN Ethics Office. The Chair of the Committee participated in the annual session of the Executive Board in June 2017. In addition to formal meetings, Committee members continued their internal consultations and deliberations, document review and provision of advice to UN-Women management via telephone and e-mail interaction.

8. Minutes from the meetings were prepared and approved. The Committee interacts regularly with the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director during each meeting and formally reports on its deliberations after each on-site meeting.

9. In December 2017, two Committee members participated in a five-day field visit to the regional office of UN-Women in Senegal and the Entity's country office in Nigeria. The objective of the field visit was to enable Committee members to better understand field operations, gain an appreciation for how the business objectives of UN-Women are achieved, and effectively carry out their oversight role and add value to UN-Women. Key observations from the field visit were shared with fellow Committee members and UN-Women management.

A. Board of Auditors

10. The Committee has met regularly with the Board of Auditors (BoAs) to share relevant information and understand the strategies implemented to ensure overall audit coverage for UN-Women, which includes the work performed by the UN-Women Audit Unit.

11. The Committee has also regularly been updated on the implementation status of the recommendations contained in the BoAs' management letters and reports. The Committee supports efforts by UN-Women to implement outstanding

recommendations in a timely manner and within available resources. The Committee underscores the importance that UN-Women address the underlying systemic and strategic issues contained in those recommendations with sustainable solutions in a consistent and ongoing basis to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the Entity's programme and mandate delivery.

B. Regional architecture and organizational challenges

12. The Committee has been briefed extensively by senior management on the organizational challenges that UN-Women has experienced since its formal inception in 2011, when four entities of the United Nations were combined to create UN-Women.

13. In 2014, the implementation of the regional architecture of UN-Women was completed. As noted in the Committee's previous reports, the regional architecture was one of the Entity's organizational priorities. An independent evaluation of the regional architecture was completed in 2016, and UN-Women has indicated that it is working to address the recommendations.

14. In response to the evaluation, the Committee understands that during 2017 UN-Women began to review its global presence to identify responsibilities for and differences in programme delivery and operations among regional offices, multi-country offices, country offices and programme presence. The Committee further understands that UN-Women is developing policy and guidance to assess country differentiated presence typology and make appropriate structural adjustments in line with the Strategic Plan 2018–2021. It is important that UN-Women promulgate those country-office typology principles as soon as is realistic and implement the identified changes in its global footprint, taking into consideration UN Development System reforms.

15. Also in line with commitments made by UN-Women in its management response to the evaluation, the Entity undertook a Headquarters' Functional Analysis and a strategic business planning exercise (which included proposals for contingency planning in 2018–2019). The results of these reviews are being discussed by senior management and may inform change management initiatives to support the implementation of the new Strategic Plan. The Committee views these activities as being of prime importance, particularly in view of current UN reform initiatives. The Committee commends UN-Women on its leadership in this area. The Committee further encourages the Entity to explore its unique niche in the UN system, for example, its UN coordination role and intergovernmental normative support for gender equality and empowerment for women and girls, which takes place in the context of its operational activities and through its field presence. The Committee looks forward to more discussion on UN-Women's change management initiatives and on its way forward, including its positioning within the UN reform agenda.

16. As part of this discussion, UN-Women needs to continue to assess and implement appropriate structures to support its Second Line of Defense at headquarters and in the field. The Committee understands that financial specialists have been identified in regional offices as part of the Virtual Global Service Center (VGSC) to support field operations. As noted in previous Committee reports, it may also be prudent to identify human resource specialist positions in the regional offices as well as organizational focal points in field offices for the ethics function.

17. The Committee also understands that UN-Women continues to update its Human Resource Strategy, implement organizational development initiatives, enhance career development and performance management, and address issues raised as a result of

its 2016 Global Workforce Survey, particularly those related to work-life balance. The Committee looks forward to further discussion on human resource initiatives.

C. Programming activities

18. The Committee continues to support UN-Women in its 2015 initiative to move to Flagship Programming Initiatives (FPIs) to further align the Entity's normative, UN coordination and operational work, thus improving overall programmatic clarity. The Committee understands that the FPIs do provide a strategic direction for the Entity at large and support countries in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, additional direction and feedback from Headquarters may be needed in order to implement FPIs more effectively at a country level. Further, it may be helpful to clarify responsibilities and roles of Headquarters' units and their relationships with field offices to ensure effective integration and programme delivery.

19. During 2017, the Entity continued to improve its results-based management system (RMS), which is intended to place a greater focus on results and value, simplify the management and reporting of performance indicators, and provide a more direct link between programme results and budget expenditures/financial flows. For example, the Country Office Assessment Tool (COAT) was enhanced to include data from various sources providing managers with a holistic overview of office performance to support data driven management, planning and monitoring.

20. The Committee underscores the importance of providing appropriate language-sensitive training and capacity building when rolling out results-based management tools in order to support their sustainable usage and result in the efficiency gains desired and needed.

21. The Committee supports UN-Women in continuing to enhance its RMS and build strong monitoring systems in the field. The Committee understands that UN-Women is also strengthening enterprise risk management integration with RMS through, for example, including annual risk registers as part of the annual work planning process.

22. The Committee reiterates that UN-Women continues to monitor closely the management of advances made to implementing partners to fully address the underlying causes/systemic weaknesses of the long outstanding advances and mitigate the risk that such funds could be used for unintended activities. It is also important to address the issue of late financial project closure, particularly at Headquarters. Such issues can affect UN-Women's reputational risk. It is important that improved awareness of all such risks and their impact is understood and embedded within UN-Women's internal culture.

D. Funding framework and resource mobilization

23. The Committee appreciates the elements included and the complexities of UN-Women's Funding Framework and budgetary processes. The Committee reiterates the importance of ensuring transparency and cost alignment in the funding framework in line with agreed cost classifications.

24. One key aspect of UN-Women's financial realities is its resource mobilization targets and strategies, on which the Committee is updated regularly. As noted in previous reports, the Committee has been advised of the potential opportunities that the regional architecture may present to strengthen and increase the linkages for inter-agency coordination and resource mobilization at the local level. The Committee

underscores the importance that resource mobilization efforts in the field match the revised strategic direction and focus on UN-Women's unique role in the field. Assessment of the respective country context is needed to establish realistic goals and activities for country offices to facilitate effective working relationships among the partnering country, UN-Women and other UN agencies.

25. The Committee continues to note the Entity's ongoing challenges regarding resource mobilization and understands that resource mobilization remains the highest organizational risk for the Entity. In view of its high risk, a resource mobilization performance audit was conducted during 2017, where the resource mobilization function of UN-Women was assessed as partially satisfactory/major improvement needed. "This rating was mainly due to: unclear responsibility and accountability for corporate resource mobilization; and inadequate processes for the development, monitoring and approval of the corporate resource mobilization strategy and action plans." UN-Women has provided comments and an action plan to address the recommendations included in the audit. The Committee looks forward to updates with respect to implementation of the recommendations.

26. In 2017, the Committee understands that UN-Women initiated drafting a new resource mobilization strategy, which will identify approaches to expand core and non-core member state support and grow private sector income; for example, increasing the numbers and scope of strategic business partnerships and developing public giving through new direct marketing programmes and infrastructure.

27. The Committee also understands that during 2017 the resource mobilization team was reorganized to allow greater focus on deepening and diversifying resource mobilization. Further, additional internal capacity and professionalization is being built through, for example, establishing Communities of Practice to encourage exchange of best practices internally and with other UN agencies.

28. However, the Committee reiterates the importance of realistic targets and clear assignment of responsibility and accountability for resource mobilization for both core and non-core resources. Without such clarity, the risks of not meeting resource requirements are increased, and resources may not be sufficient for UN Women to carry out its mandate.

29. The Committee encourages UN-Women to continue to identify innovative solutions to resource mobilization at Headquarters and in the field, including the use of social media tools. The pace of resource mobilization clearly needs to be accelerated and delivery through implementing partners needs to be more effective. The Committee reiterates the importance of UN-Women focusing on quality and capacity of implementing partners and supports its continued advocacy and private sector engagement efforts. The Committee further encourages UN-Women to align its resource mobilization strategies with its strategic vision for the Entity, and its regions, and to provide increased internal capacity, along with new organizational arrangements, if necessary.

E. Enterprise risk management

30. In 2017, UN-Women continued to implement its enterprise risk management strategy by embedding and mainstreaming risk management into its business processes. The Committee underscores the importance of achieving a working culture in which risk assessment is understood as a helpful management tool and an investment in future programmatic success instead of an additional burden.

31. The Committee recommends that further awareness of the value and necessity of risk management is needed to support its sustainable integration into day-to-day

operations, particularly with respect to risk ownership in the field. The Committee understands that UN-Women will include a component on enterprise risk management as a fundamental part of its programme management-training curriculum. The Committee also underscores the importance of building awareness of fraud risk management. The Committee supports UN-Women's efforts to date.

32. The Committee reiterates the importance of both the Board of Auditors and internal auditors being cognizant of the enterprise risk-management framework and its components such that current risk profiles and registers inform audit plans, as necessary.

F. Internal audit

33. The UN-Women internal audit and investigation functions have been carried out under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between UN-Women and the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since March of 2012.

34. In 2014, UN-Women commenced the process of determining whether value for money was obtained through outsourcing the internal audit function or whether an in-house internal audit function would be preferable. In 2017, UN-Women identified options for the most appropriate model to deliver internal auditing, including the financial resources required for the management and administrative structure of the function and its implementation.

35. The AAC reviewed and discussed in detail the options identified and supported UN-Women's recommendation to move forward with the establishment of one organizational unit beginning in 2018 that would bring the independent assurance functions of internal audit and evaluation under an integrated umbrella. As noted in the Committee's 2016 report, such an oversight unit could create synergies between the functions, improve effectiveness and value-for-money, and support increased overall assurance with respect to UN-Women's operations, programmes, and performance. However, in doing so, the Committee continues to emphasize that the necessary safeguards are put in place to ensure that the independence and results expected of the two functions are not jeopardized.

36. To support the planning and implementation of the in-house internal audit function, the Committee provided ongoing advice to UN-Women management. For example, the Committee reviewed the Charters of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) and the Internal Audit Service (IAS), as well as the IEAS Multi-year (2018–2021) Rolling Risk-based Audit Plan and Strategy. The Committee Chair also participated on the recruitment interview panels for the Director of the IEAS and the Chief of the IAS.

37. The Committee commends UN-Women to-date in transitioning internal audit by, among other things, contracting with an expert oversight professional to assist in its implementation and working closely with OAI to adopt relevant internal audit policies, procedures and systems. Furthermore, the SLA between UN-Women and OAI was extended to 31 March 2018 to facilitate completion of ongoing internal audit reports and support a smooth transition to the new audit unit.

38. The Committee also recommended in its 2014 report that, as part of the process of studying options for the most appropriate internal audit model, UN-Women determine the level of audit assurance required. This is particularly important in view of the audit opinion required by Executive Board decision 2015/4. The annual audit opinion is now based on the internal audit work performed during the year, and currently the audit coverage is somewhat limited. The Committee trusts that this

coverage can be augmented in future years and supports the continued strengthening of the internal audit services of UN-Women in order to ensure sufficiency of audit coverage in audit plans, further to Executive Board's decision No. 2015/4.

39. Further, it is important that the in-house internal audit unit and the BoAs engage in ongoing communication to enhance planning and coordination, thus ensuring appropriately aligned audit coverage and the complementarity of the audit functions. This is particularly relevant in view of the annual audit opinion requested by the Executive Board, noted in paragraph 38. In addition to assurance from internal efforts, the external audit coverage adds another aspect of assurance and strengthens the overall assurance provided to the Entity.

40. The Committee reviewed the annual internal audit workplans for both 2017 and 2018, which were developed by the UN-Women Audit Unit in OAI. The 2018 internal audit workplan was subsequently revised by the IAS to reflect organizational risk issues and was again reviewed and endorsed by the Committee.

41. In 2017, the annual risk assessments of headquarters' entities and processes and field offices were refined to reflect changes to UN-Women's organizational structure and strategic and operational priorities. It is important that the annual internal audit risk assessment exercise also leverages the results of the Entity's risk registers, developed as part of its enterprise risk management framework.

42. The Committee was provided with quarterly progress reports and briefed on the results of the various audit engagements performed during 2017, including systemic and recurring issues of interest. It is important that UN-Women address recurring audit issues, such as those in field offices, relating to delays in strategizing and initiation of mobilization of funds, inadequate project monitoring and oversight, and weaknesses in asset management, and those dealing with Entity-wide or corporate issues.

G. Investigations

43. The Committee received regular updates from OAI, which provided an overview of the investigation caseload, the breakdown of the nature of the allegations, and the status of the cases.

44. In 2017, UN-Women assessed the quality and timeliness of services provided by OAI for its investigation function and developed options identifying the most appropriate modality to deliver this function effectively with the commensurate resources.

45. Beginning in 2018, the investigation function will be carried out pursuant to a Service Level Agreement between UN-Women and the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), a copy of which was reviewed by Committee members who recommended some revisions for consideration.

46. Because the investigation function continues to be out-sourced, it is important that the designated responsible official within UN-Women be the Director of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services who reports directly to the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director. The assignment of such responsibilities to this independent oversight office is in line with best practice. The IEAS office would provide the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director with reports setting out the current investigation cases as well as identifying the action taken and any follow up required by UN-Women management. Under this arrangement, UN-Women can satisfy itself that there is appropriate follow-up for cases that warrant investigation and further action, and that UN-Women's accountability for decision-making and results is assured.

47. The Committee also notes the decrease in new investigation cases in 2017, compared to 2016. It is important that UN-Women continue to focus on creating a greater awareness of the reporting obligation and the channels to do so.

48. The Committee commends UN-Women on developing its own "Anti-fraud policy" in 2017 to strengthen its approach to fraud and corruption, which will provide UN-Women staff, implementing partners, as well as vendors, with a clear policy on fraud prevention, detection and response.

H. Evaluation function

49. The Independent Evaluation Office shared its 2016 Report on the Evaluation Function at UN-Women as well as its Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018–2021. The Committee understands that corporate and decentralized evaluation plans are aligned with the current Strategic Plan, and as such, evaluations can be used to assess achievements expected in the Plan. The Committee further understands that evaluation results are widely shared within UN-Women to effect positive change through increasing knowledge and improving performance.

50. Further to the organizational change that situates internal audit and independent evaluation into one Headquarters organizational unit, as noted in paragraph 35, the Committee continues to stress the importance of appropriate centralized and decentralized resourcing of the evaluation function. The Committee understands that the Regional Evaluation Specialists play a major role in supporting decentralized evaluations through quality assurance and technical advice as well as management of regional evaluations. The Committee notes the high degree of coordination between headquarters and evaluation specialists in the regions and underscores the importance of maintaining the direct reporting relationship of the Regional Evaluation Specialists to the head of the independent evaluation function.

51. As noted in its 2016 annual report, the Committee understands that the future projected budget for the evaluation function is 3 per cent of UN-Women's total plan/programme budget, as recommended in its evaluation policy. The Committee believes that this percentage appears high, given the size of UN-Women and the resource challenges that it faces. With the establishment of one organizational unit for independent evaluation and audit services, economies of scale may materialize. It may be possible for UN-Women to focus additional resources on areas such as programme monitoring, risk mitigation and results measurement.

I. Ethics

52. In 2011, UN-Women established an institutional arrangement with the UN Ethics Office to provide ethics services to the Entity.

53. In 2017, to strengthen the culture of ethics and integrity at UN-Women, UN-Women initiated more interaction and communication between UN-Women senior management (including UN-Women's Legal Advisor) and the UN Ethics Office. UN-Women established a functioning focal point for ethics liaison in UN-Women to ensure that the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director is regularly informed of ongoing activities in this area.

54. The Committee understands that UN-Women has developed a new ethics policy, to be promulgated in 2018, accompanied by detailed training, which will encourage a speak-up culture within the Entity and provide UN-Women staff competencies needed to detect and report wrong-doing, knowledge on how to protect against retaliation, as well as managerial skills related to respective rules and regulations.

The Committee looks forward to further updates on this policy and its implementation and encourages language-sensitive training to ensure the desired impact is achieved.

J. Financial statements

55. The Committee reviewed the draft financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2016. The Committee commends UN-Women on receiving an unqualified audit opinion from the Board of Auditors for the sixth consecutive year since its inception in 2010. The financial reporting for UN-Women continues to improve and refinements continue to be made, as necessary.

K. Information and Communication Technology

56. The Committee is regularly updated on information and communication technology (ICT) initiatives. The Committee supports positioning ICT as a strategic enabler and underscores the importance of investment in ICT to ensure optimal IT solutions. The Committee notes that in Headquarters the ratio of consultants to UN-Women staff is high, which could pose a future risk to the entity, particularly in view of the increasing risk and complexity of UN-Women's ICT system environment.

L. Strategic Plan 2018-2021

57. The Committee was regularly updated on the development of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, the participatory approach in which UN–Women engaged extensively with Member States, its underlying theory of change, and the evolving results framework. The Committee understands that UN-Women's triple mandate (normative/operational/UN coordination) will have a greater focus on leveraging its strengths in UN coordination and policy advice/intergovernmental support, to achieve substantive results and support effective programme delivery thus adding more value to stakeholders.

III. Final considerations

58. The Committee has reviewed the Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017 (UNW/2018/4), to be submitted to the Executive Board at its annual session, and has taken note of the significant internal audit results identified.

59. The Committee expresses its support for the continued strengthening of governance, risk management, internal controls and accountability at UN-Women. However, the Committee continues to be concerned that the current funding situation of UN-Women may affect its ability to adequately resource key accountability functions and activities such as internal audit (including increasing internal audit coverage), enterprise risk management, and monitoring and oversight, which includes functions in the Second Line of Defence in Headquarters and the field.

60. The Committee supports the continued collaboration of UN-Women with partners within and outside the United Nations in achieving its strategic objectives in advancing gender equality, promoting the empowerment of women and girls and ending violence against women.

United Nations UNW/2018/4

Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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Evaluation

Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2017

Summary

This report summarizes the performance of the UN-Women evaluation function in the areas of corporate and decentralized evaluations and provides an overview of measures undertaken to strengthen the contribution of UN-Women to the United Nations system-wide coordination and national capacity development for gender-responsive evaluation. The report also provides information on the new Global Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021, which outlines the evaluation strategic direction to support the implementation of the UN-Women Strategic Plan. In addition, the report presents the 2018 programme of work and budget for the Independent Evaluation Service (IES[1]).

The Executive Board may wish to: (i) take note of the report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2017 and the programme of work and budget for 2018 of the IES; (ii) welcome the steps taken by UN-Women to establish a credible and useful evaluation function and its contribution to system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts and national evaluation capacity development; (iii) express continuing support for the strengthening of the Independent Evaluation function in UN-Women; and (iv) request that IES seek out opportunities with other United Nations agencies to conduct a joint evaluation of the Common Chapter of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

[1] UN-Women established the Independent Evaluation and Internal Audit Services on 1 January 2018. Throughout the report, the previous name — Independent Evaluation Office — is used for activities that were undertaken in 2017. The new name — Independent Evaluation Service — is used for planned activities in 2018.

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"We must ensure the Sustainable Development Goals help transform the lives of people around the world. Words must be turned into impactful action. This will not happen without accountability, evaluation and learning." – Amina Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General[2]

I. Transforming women's and girl's lives through evaluation

1. In 2017, the UN-Women Executive Board endorsed UN-Women's new Strategic Plan 2018–2021. To contribute to its successful implementation, the UN-Women's Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) developed its new Global Evaluation Strategy for 2018–2021.

2. The Global Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021 articulates the strategic direction of UN-Women's evaluation function and its objectives to support the Entity's efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls. It outlines how UN-Women will leverage its evaluation function to provide evaluative evidence for greater impact on the lives of the women and girls it serves. The strategy sets out five strategic areas of work: (i) implementing effective corporate evaluation systems; (ii) implementing effective decentralized evaluation systems; (iii) promoting United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation; (iv) strengthening national evaluation capacities for gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation systems; and (v) strengthening evaluation use. Meanwhile, the Corporate Evaluation Plan provides a time-bound framework within which useful evaluation evidence is generated systematically on work performance under the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

3. The Evaluation Strategy emphasizes the following key priorities: (i) improving use of gender-responsive evaluation by UN-Women and its partners for learning and strategic decision-making; (ii) providing timely and relevant evaluative evidence on UN-Women's contribution to development and organizational effectiveness and efficiency results; and (iii) increasing demand for gender-responsive evaluations to support accountability for gender-equality commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and beyond. The strategy identifies innovation, knowledge hub, and forming and sustaining partnerships and networks as key drivers of change for promoting gender-responsive evaluation.

Governance of the evaluation function

Co-location of the independent evaluation and internal audit functions

4. The Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) was established in January 2018. This followed the Executive Board's decision in August 2017 to approve appropriation for the institutional budget, including the budget for the IEAS and their co-location under one oversight service umbrella. A new charter was developed that outlines the mandate, scope of work and roles and responsibilities of the new office.

5. Under one oversight service umbrella, the independent evaluation and internal audit functions shall work together to contribute to providing oversight and assurance of UN-Women's work and organizational learning. While using different work methodologies, both functions share complementarities and can effectively leverage synergies, such as in planning, execution and reporting. Within this architecture, the evaluation function will remain operationally and functionally independent. It will

[2] Executive Leadership Training Programme (2018). UNITAR – Claremont Graduate University. Accessible at http://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/uploads/elpe_electronic_19.9.17.pdf.

continue to be governed by the UN-Women Evaluation Policy, which is implemented through the Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021 and Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018–2021.

6. The Global Evaluation Advisory Committee (GEAC) continued to serve as a corporate advisory mechanism to the Executive Director and the IEO on the independence and quality of the evaluation function. In 2017, the GEAC met to assess the performance of the evaluation function for the period 2014 to 2017. The Committee appreciated IEO for demonstrating impressive performance in evaluation and recognizing management engagement with the evaluation function, particularly the extensive use of evaluative evidence to inform the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

7. The Committee advised UN-Women management to work closely with IEO and relevant divisions to realize the full potential of the evaluation function to capture stories of change and impact of UN-Women. Considering the co-location of the independent evaluation and internal audit functions, the Committee stressed the need to ensure adequate balance, synchronization and functional integrity of both functions. In congruence with the priorities of the Strategic Plan, the Committee recommended IEO to work in closer partnerships with other entities and find creative ways to encourage learning through evaluation functions; facilitate use of evaluation findings; and continue its leadership in United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) task forces and EvalGender+ for influencing system-wide practice and gender-responsive national evaluation capacity development.

II. Implementing effective corporate evaluations

Implementation of the Corporate Evaluation Plan (2017-2018)

8. At the corporate level, UN-Women IEO ensured coverage of the key result areas of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2014–2017 by providing a comprehensive assessment of its normative, United Nations system coordination and operational work. This included seven corporate evaluations of the integrated mandate and the Strategic Plan's thematic areas; four meta-analyses of all evaluations managed by UN-Women; and two joint reviews on gender policies and practices in the United Nations system and beyond.

9. In 2017, IEO presented three evaluation reports to the Executive Board: (i) corporate evaluation of UN-Women's regional architecture; (ii) corporate evaluation of UN-Women's strategic partnerships for gender equality and the empowerment of women; and (iii) meta-analysis of evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2016. These reports were accompanied by a management response. As per the 2017–2018 work programme of the Corporate Evaluation Plan, two corporate thematic evaluations have been initiated and will be presented to the Executive Board in 2018 and 2019. However, the evaluation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which was planned in 2017, has been cancelled to avoid duplication. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations system, as part of its system-wide mandate, has included the UN-SWAP evaluation in its programme of work in 2018 for submission to the General Assembly, as requested in resolution 67/226[3].

10. The implementation status of corporate evaluations for the 2017–2018 period is presented in Table 1.

[3] Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 2012: https://undocs.org/A/RES/67/226.

Table 1
Implementation status of planned corporate evaluations (2017–2018)

	Title of evaluative study	*Additional information*
1.	Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's Regional Architecture	Presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session, 2017
2.	Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's Strategic Partnerships for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women	Presented to the Executive Board at the annual session, 2017
3.	Meta-analysis of Evaluations Managed by UN--Women in 2016	Presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session, 2017
4.	Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to Women's Leadership and Political Participation	To be presented to the Executive Board at the annual session, 2018
5.	Corporate Thematic Evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to Governance and National Planning, Fully Reflecting Accountability for Gender Equality Commitments and Priorities	To be presented to the Executive Board at the annual session, 2019
6.	Meta-analysis of Evaluations Managed by UN-Women in 2017	To be presented to the Executive Board at the second regular session, 2018
7.	Evaluation of UN-SWAP on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	Cancelled (to be conducted by JIU in 2018)

11. To provide a coherent framework for evaluating the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021, IES has developed a Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018–2021. The plan includes ten corporate evaluations, co-management of 100 per cent of regional and country portfolio evaluations, technical assistance of up to 12 headquarter-led evaluations, and 100 per cent of country-level evaluations. The plan was approved by the Executive Director and presented to UN-Women's Executive Board in September 2017. Two corporate evaluation topics are still to be decided; implementation is contingent on funding availability. Responding to the Member States request to conduct a joint evaluation of the Common Chapter of Strategic Plan with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, UN-Women will update its Corporate Evaluation Plan in 2018.

12. In 2017, IEO undertook two important activities for improving evaluation approaches and methodologies. The first was commissioning the development of an evaluation approach entitled Inclusive System Evaluation for Gender Equalities, Environments and Marginalized Voices (ISE4GEMs) in collaboration with James Cook University (Australia) and the University of Hull (the United Kingdom). The approach combines innovative systemic evaluation practice with intersectional analysis and is especially relevant in the SDG era for UN-Women and partners. The second was the completion of a feasibility study on how UN-Women can use big data to improve evaluation. It aims to fully understand opportunities that big data methods can provide for improving the quality, credibility and scope of evaluations.

Corporate evaluations as an agent of change

13. UN-Women has continued to use evaluation findings and recommendations of major corporate evaluations to inform changes and improve policies, strategies and programming practices.

Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women Regional Architecture Evaluation

14. The UN-Women Regional Architecture Evaluation, which was completed in 2016 and presented to the Executive Board (UNW/2017/CPR. 2) in 2017, helped UN-Women to review organizational design and inform ongoing change-management processes. The evaluation led to the enhancement of the programme management and strategic planning functions through reconfiguration of the role of the Regional Programme Management Team. In addition, UN-Women initiated a process to update the functional analysis of headquarters (HQ) functions to improve synergies and analytical and programmatic support to the field, and to respond to growing demand in disaster risk management, humanitarian response and resilience. The Internal Control Framework and Delegation of Authority was also updated to reflect these shifts, with a greater emphasis on decentralization and empowerment of the field.

15. In response to the evaluation, UN-Women has developed an internal tool, which sets out objectives to help inform considerations for UN-Women's country presence typology. As part of efficiency measures, the evaluation led to the conversion from a multi-country to country-office model in Europe and Central Asia. Similar changes are underway or under review for other multi-country offices. The exception is the multi-country office model in the Caribbean and the Pacific, where small-island geography makes it more applicable, as per evaluation recommendations.

16. Finally, the evaluation noted a significant gap in knowledge management that undermines the capacity of the organization to be joined up and present itself as a credible authority on gender equality with partners at country and regional levels. UN-Women responded by establishing an internal knowledge management group led by the Directors of Policy and Programme as well as the development of a new knowledge management strategy.

17. These changes reflect the overall effort by UN-Women, in line with the evaluation, to clarify roles, and improve efficiency and effectiveness, as it implements Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

18. As of December 2017, out of the eight actions formulated to respond to the eight recommendations contained in the evaluation, three (38 per cent) have been completed, and five (62 per cent) are ongoing and expected to be completed by the end of 2018.

Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to United Nations system coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment

19. The response of UN-Women to the Corporate Evaluation of the contribution of UN-Women to United Nations system coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women, which was presented to the Executive Board in 2016 (UNW/2016/CRP.7), has been similarly positive. The evaluation created an opportunity to deepen the understanding and implementation of the entity's coordination mandate. In response to one of the evaluation's main recommendations, UN-Women has updated its theory of change and coordination strategy on the implementation of its coordination mandate. The process involved broad participation by divisions across the entity. This fostered greater ownership and investment in, as well as visibility and recognition of, this crucial portfolio of the entity's work. In

response to the evaluation, staff involved in coordination functions and mechanisms throughout the entity were able to clarify and strengthen their role.

20. Furthermore, the new Strategic Plan 2018–2021 clarifies how the composite mandate of UN-Women is indivisible and will be leveraged in a fully integrated fashion, including through the Strategic Plan. In this context, the upgrade of the Results Management System to better capture results of coordination functions has resulted in the development of a project module that will gradually capture joint programmes implemented on the ground.

21. As of December 2017, out of the 31 actions formulated to respond to the eight recommendations contained in the evaluation, 26 (84 per cent) have been completed and five (16 per cent) are ongoing and expected to be completed by the end of 2018.

III. Performance of the evaluation function in UN-Women

22. The global evaluation oversight system (GEOS) provided periodic information to managers at different levels to propel and sustain progress on the performance of the evaluation function. All nine key performance indicators tracked under the GEOS dashboard have made commendable gains since 2014.

Table 1
Trends in key performance indicators (2014–2017)

Key performance indicator	*Description*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*Target (by 2017)*
Financial resources invested in evaluation function	Evaluation expenditure over UN-Women programme expenditure	2.2	2.0	2.9[a]	2.7	3.0
Human resources for monitoring and evaluation	Offices that appointed a monitoring and evaluation focal point or officer	98.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Evaluation coverage	Offices that conducted at least one evaluation since 2011	68.0	71.0	84.0	89.0	100.0
Evaluation implementation rate	Percentage of evaluations being implemented	71.0	76.0	84.0	84.0	95.0
Quality of evaluations	Percentage of evaluations rated "satisfactory and above"	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Evaluation reports posted on GATE	Percentage of completed evaluation reports posted on GATE	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Management response submission to GATE	Percentage of completed evaluation reports submitted with management response to GATE	86.0	86.0	94.0	100.0	100.0
Implementation of management response	Percentage of management response key actions being implemented	83.0	85.0	94.0	86.0	90.0
Use of evaluations	Percentage of offices that reported using evaluation	71.0	75.0	–[b]	86.0	90.0

[a] The figures for 2016 and 2017 are calculated using the new methodology; therefore it is not comparable to previous years.

[b] Due to glitches in the corporate Results Management Systems, data on evaluation use for 2016 was not captured in the annual reporting by offices.

23. Taken together, four out of the nine key performance indicators achieved targets, and five made considerable progress towards meeting the established targets. The level of evaluation reports rated "satisfactory" and "above" have stabilized at 100 per cent. One hundred per cent of completed evaluations were made publicly available through the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system (GATE). Since 2014, IEO has received 100 per cent of management responses for corporate evaluations and an average of 92 per cent of management responses for decentralized evaluations. Implementation of agreed actions for evaluations completed in 2017 reached 86 per cent.

24. Implementation of planned evaluations reached 84 per cent. This constitutes a 13 percentage point increase, from 71 per cent in 2014. The number of offices with at least one evaluation reached 89 per cent in 2017, up 22 percentage points compared to 2014. This still falls short of the evaluation policy, which requires at least one evaluation to be commissioned during each cycle. Reporting on use of evaluative evidence increased to 86 per cent in 2017, from 71 per cent in 2014.

25. Overall, progress is attributable to the consolidation of oversight and quality assurance systems, roll-out of various evaluation guidance, and tools and strong capacity development initiatives. More importantly, oversight and quality assurance support provided by regional evaluation specialists has had a direct impact on the quality and increased evaluation culture at the decentralized level. Active collaboration among IEO, Programme Division and Regional Offices also has resulted in increased attention to evaluation by managers.

26. While all indicators have improved, performance patterns among regions are diverse, and more needs to be done for the continued progression and advancement of the function. Region-specific efforts and continued investments are required to build capacities at every level and to drive progress of all key performance indicators within the framework of the new Global Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021.

Key performance indicator 1: financial resources

Table 2
Evaluation function expenditure (2013–2016)

(United States dollars)

	2013	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*
Total UN-Women expenditure	269 660 584	270 537 900	315 101 084	254 413 520	249 447 953
Total expenditure on evaluation	3 576 396	5 917 163	6 272 545	7 391 573	6 714 506
IEO	2 123 750	4 499 942	4 621 818	5 377 637	4 208 814
Decentralized evaluations[6]	1 226 729	1 417 221	1 650 727	2 013 936	2 505 691
Total evaluation expenditure (percentage)	**1.3**	**2.2**	**2.0**	**2.9**	**2.7**[7]

Source: "Total UN-Women expenditure" and "IEO expenditure" figures were generated from ATLAS by the Division of Management and Administration (DMA). Figures for decentralized evaluations were calculated based on official figures by DMA and supplemented by data obtained from field offices.

[6] Estimated costs for decentralized evaluations included a broad range of categories, such as conduct of evaluation, capacity development on evaluation, M&E staff cost, and communication and dissemination of evaluation products.

[7] The figures for 2016 and 2017 are calculated using new methodology; therefore it is not comparable to previous years.

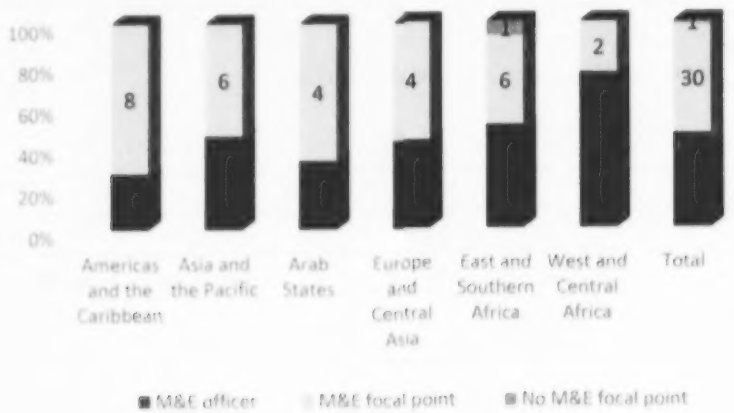
27. Total spending on evaluation in 2017 was $6.7 million (2016: $7.4 million), representing 2.7 per cent (2016: 2.9 per cent) of the UN-Women "programme expenditure". Of this, 63 per cent (2016: 73 per cent) comprised the expenditure of the IEO and 37 per cent (2016: 27 per cent) expenditure related to decentralized evaluations. The IEO expenditure includes salary of six regional evaluation specialists, who are part of the IEO but deployed in regional offices to support the decentralized evaluation function. The decrease in total spending on evaluation of 10 per cent in 2017 was largely due to a reduction in cost sharing resources.

Key performance indicator 2: human resources

28. The work of the UN-Women IEO in 2017 was supported by ten headquarter staff members and six evaluation specialists based in each regional office. The positions of Director for the newly-established IEAS and Chief for the IES have been advertised, with recruitment to be finalized in 2018.

29. There are diverse institutional arrangements for staffing at the field level. In 2017, 26 country and regional offices (46 per cent) reported having at least one monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officer. The remaining offices had appointed an M&E focal point. Due to limited capacity, one office in East and Southern Africa is directly supported by Regional Office. The availability of M&E officers was highest in the West and Central and the East and Southern Africa regions. Emerging demand for country portfolio evaluations and the need to facilitate learning from evaluations, requires continuous capacity development interventions at the decentralized level.

Figure 1
Human resources for monitoring and evaluation officers/focal points by region



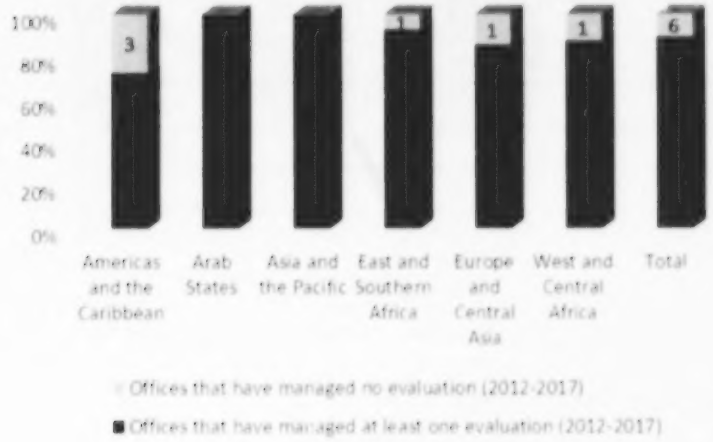
Source: Global evaluation oversight system.
Abbreviation: M&E, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Key performance indicator 3: coverage of evaluations

30. Coverage of evaluation has steadily improved over time. During the period 2012-2017, 89 per cent of country offices had carried out at least one evaluation. Nonetheless, this key performance indicator struggled to achieve full compliance as per the Evaluation Policy, which requires all offices to commission at least one evaluation during the strategic note cycle. Most prominently, Asia and Pacific and Arab States regions have achieved 100 per cent coverage. With the exception of the Americas and the Caribbean region, the regions of Europe and Central Asia, East and

Southern Africa, and West and Central Africa regions are all edging closer to full compliance. Reasons for non-compliance are associated with complex contexts and limited resources.

Figure 2
Evaluation coverage by region (2012–2017)



Source: Global evaluation oversight system.

31. IEO's efforts to promote strategic evaluations have resulted in an increased number of country portfolio evaluations (CPEs). The coverage of CPE has reached 27 per cent since its roll-out in 2015. In 2017 alone, nine CPEs were completed, compared to two in 2016. This shift suggests that country offices are emphasizing strategic evaluations, which has proved vital for generating useful evidence for development of new strategic notes. The approach allows greater coverage of UN-Women portfolios at the country level.

32. The conduct of CPEs, however, is variable across regions. The highest proportion of CPEs was conducted in East and Southern Africa, Europe and Central Asia, and West and Central Africa. The Asia and Pacific region conducted no CPEs so far. These variations might be explained by several factors related to budget allocation, capacity of offices and timeframe of strategic note cycles.

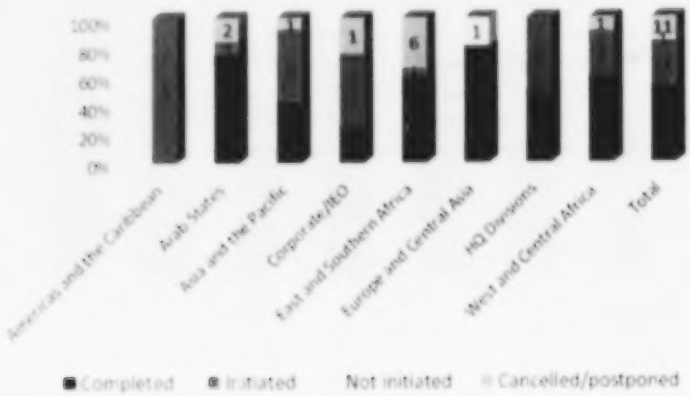
Key performance indicator 4: implementation rate of planned evaluations

33. Out of 72 evaluations planned in 2017, 84 per cent were being implemented (53 per cent completed and 31 per cent in progress). However, 15 per cent of the evaluations were either postponed or cancelled. Reasons for evaluation deferments are largely associated with the extension of strategic notes and programme agreements with donors (70 per cent); consultant capacity issues (10 per cent); and complex country contexts (10 per cent). A few evaluations were superseded by regional thematic and other evaluations (10 per cent).

34. In regional terms, the highest proportion of evaluations was completed in East and Southern Africa (29 per cent) and Arab States (26 per cent). These were followed by West and Central Africa (18 per cent), Asia and the Pacific (15 per cent), and Europe and Central Asia (12 per cent). No evaluation was completed in the Americas and Caribbean region. While progress is notable over the years, some challenges in evaluation planning need to be addressed, including more strategic and realistic

selection of evaluations, and increased capacity and accountability to manage and complete planned evaluations on time.

Figure 3
Evaluation implementation rate (2017)

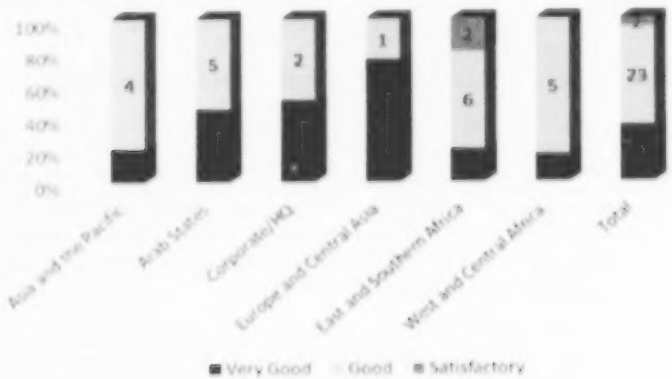


Source: Global evaluation oversight system.

Key performance indicator 5: quality of evaluation reports

35. UN-Women IEO commissioned an external meta-evaluation of all UN-Women-managed evaluations in 2017. The assessment shows a multi-dimensional improvement in the quality of evaluations. Results of the assessment show that out of 38 evaluation reports, 13 (34 per cent) were rated as very good, 23 (61 per cent) good, and two (5 per cent) satisfactory. No report has been rated as unsatisfactory. This represents 95 per cent of evaluations meeting and exceeding the established quality standards. Europe and Central Asia had the highest proportion of very good evaluations. Assessments of the quality of the evaluations is one way of determining adherence to required standards.

Figure 4
Quality of evaluations (2017)



Source: Global Evaluation Assessment and Analysis System.

Key performance indicator 6: submission rate of completed evaluation reports to GATE

36. IEO maintained an online repository of evaluations. Similar to the pattern observed in previous years, 100 per cent of completed evaluations were made publicly available through the system.

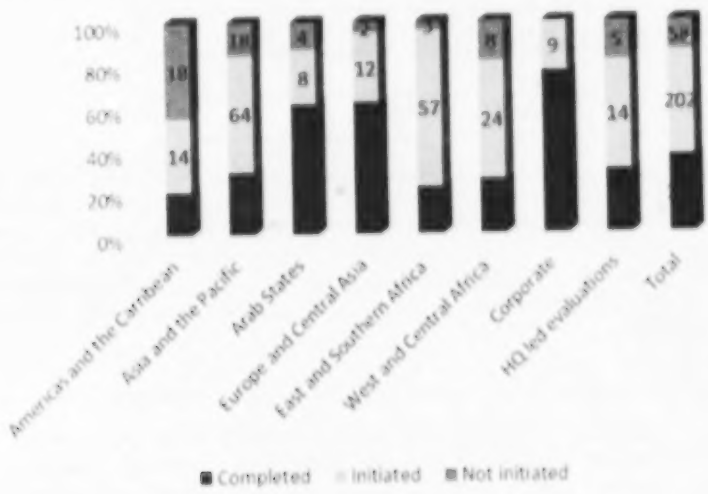
Key performance indicator 7: management response submissions to GATE

37. In 2017, 100 per cent of completed evaluations included a management response, as required by the evaluation policy—a substantial improvement from preceding years. Management responses enable UN-Women to respond to evaluation findings and reflect on how to address recommendations for improvement.

Key performance indicator 8: Implementation of management response/key actions, 2017

38. The 36 completed evaluations in 2016 committed UN-Women to undertake 411 management response actions. As of February 2017, 86 per cent of actions were either completed or in progress/ongoing (36 per cent completed and 50 per cent in progress/ongoing). Fourteen per cent of agreed actions are yet to be initiated; 7 per cent are overdue. These data reflect management commitment to organizational learning. Nevertheless, IEO has faced challenges in receiving management responses and implementing commitments to evaluation recommendations in a timely manner. Closer partnership with Programme Division and Regional Offices, and seamless integration of GATE with the Corporate Results Management System, are expected to address this challenge.

Figure 5
Implementation of evaluation management response actions



Source: Global Evaluation Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use

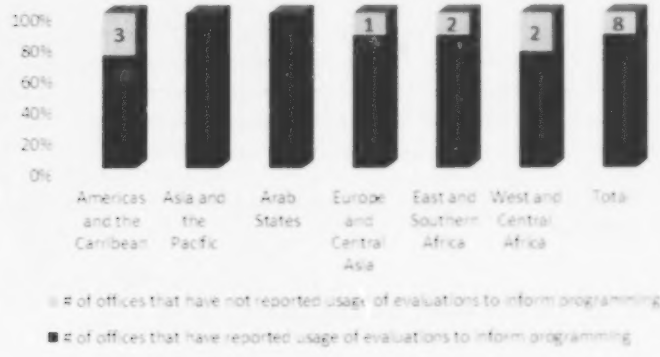
Key performance indicator 9: use of evaluation

39. There has been a steady increase in UN-Women's commitment to using evaluation to increase accountability, informed decision-making and learning. Annual

reports from offices demonstrated that there was incremental management uptake of lessons and insights from evaluations. In 2017, 86 per cent of field offices reported use of evaluations. In several areas, lessons learned have catalysed decisions to develop new strategic notes and partnership agreements. In addition, insights and lessons from evaluations were used for ensuring greater focus and deepening programme presence; strengthening staff capacity on results-based management and related issues; bridging information gaps on emerging and expanding areas of UN-Women's humanitarian work; and strengthening existing coalitions and networks.

40. Further improvement is expected in the context of the new Global Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021, which elevated the facilitation of evaluation use as one of the key pillars of work for the evaluation function.

Figure 6
Use of evaluations (2017)



Source: Results Management System.

IV. Decentralized evaluation system

41. Over the course of the previous Strategic Plan (2014-2017), significant measures have been put in place to enhance the credibility, impartiality and quality of the decentralized evaluation function. Oversight, capacity development and quality assurance systems have been consolidated and become an integral part of corporate- and field-level strategies and programming. This has resulted in considerable progress on a suite of evaluation key performance indicators, including increased organizational learning.

Quality assurance and technical support to decentralized evaluations

42. The IEO promoted collaboration across various parts of the organization for improving learning and accountability through an effective evaluation function. In 2017, IEO co-managed nine country portfolio evaluations, managed four regional evaluations and provided technical and quality assurance support to 21 decentralized evaluations. IEO also provided systematic technical support to three HQ-led evaluations.

Systems to improve the quality, credibility and use of decentralized evaluations

43. To sustain progress achieved in previous years, IEO used the global evaluation oversight system (GEOS) to periodically track and inform managers about the progress of the evaluation key performance indicators. GATE continued to serve as an online repository of evaluation reports and a vital tool for tracking progress of management responses to evaluation recommendations across UN-Women. In 2017, the system was strengthened with new functionalities to increase its ease of use.

44. The global evaluation report assessment and analysis system (GERAAS) provided an external independent assessment of all corporate and decentralized evaluation reports. All 38 evaluations completed in 2017 were quality assessed. Feedback was provided to the respective offices and a meta-evaluation report was produced. Offices with very good evaluations were acknowledged, and reports were promoted and disseminated organization-wide. IEO also maintained a consultant database that allows identification of consultants with gender and evaluation expertise.

45. In 2017, IEO developed a global evaluation plan that brought together all corporate and decentralized evaluations. The plan fostered coherence and synergies, while generating information to improve organizational effectiveness. It is now an integral part of UN-Women's efforts to support strategic planning of evaluative activities, while reinforcing timelines and adequate thematic and geographic coverage of evaluations across UN-Women's operations.

Internal evaluation capacity development and professionalization programme on evaluation

46. Recognizing the existing needs and phased approach required to build internal capacities, a variety of methods were undertaken by the IEO through evaluation trainings, guidance material and continuous technical support to the decentralized evaluation function.

47. The professionalization initiative to strengthen the evaluation function has continued to attract both UN-Women staff and external stakeholders to participate in the eLearning course How to Manage Gender-Responsive Evaluation. Sixty-three per cent of UN-Women offices have at least one M&E focal point that has received certification of completion, representing an 8 per cent improvement from last year. The eLearning course is publicly accessible and has enrolled 2,078 individuals, an increase of almost 900 individuals since 2016. Eighty-five per cent of individuals that completed the course reported that they felt they would be able to integrate a gender perspective into their work. The professionalization initiative also included working with human resources to reflect gender responsive evaluation competencies and responsibilities in relevant job profiles of the newly launched job dictionary.

48. Further in 2017, IEO delivered learning events through its regional evaluation specialists that reached hundreds of UN-Women staff. At the decentralized level, direct coaching and technical assistance were provided, including review of evaluation terms of reference, reports, and monitoring and evaluation plans; evaluability of strategic notes; and facilitating use of evaluation evidence. Due to the frequent change of M&E focal points, specific and continuous capacity development interventions are needed. This requires additional efforts and resources from UN-Women.

49. IEO also continued to be represented in regional- and headquarter-led peer review sessions for new strategic notes. This platform remained valuable to ensure preparation of costed evaluation plans, evaluability of programmes and systematic integration of lessons into new programming.

V. Communication to facilitate use of evaluation

Implementation of the communication strategy

50. Knowledge management and communications remained a key focus of IEO's activity in 2017. IEO has developed and implemented a Communications and Evaluation Use Strategy and has calibrated its outreach to relevant audiences via different communications channels. It produced a minimum communications package for each corporate evaluation, which includes an evaluation report, brief, magazine, announcements, webinars, Executive Board presentation and social media.

51. IEO continued to produce Transform, the magazine for gender-responsive evaluation. Online reader-engagement data show that Transform is accessed an average of over 2,000 times per issue annually, far exceeding the access data for the evaluation reports themselves (400 times). In 2017, three Transform issues were produced: (i) UN-Women's Regional Architecture; (ii) UN-Women's Strategic Partnerships; and (iii) the fourth meta-analysis of decentralized evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2016.

Innovative communication and knowledge management

52. To transform IEO into a "knowledge hub" for gender-responsive evaluation, knowledge management systems and other communication activities were further developed and used in 2017. GATE was upgraded to provide timely support to staff across UN-Women. In line with its growing online presence, IEO revamped its intranet and website with an improved search function. In 2017, website returning visitors' rates reached 67.2 per cent, compared with 46.5 per cent in 2015, demonstrating increased audience engagement with the evaluation website content.

53. IEO has leveraged participation in conferences and webinars to engage a broad external audience through live social media coverage. Social media messages were often picked up by broad accounts, such as the UN-Women HQ account, expanding reach beyond IEO's typical audience. The gender-equality evaluation portal website continued to be a key resource, regarding what works and what does not work for gender equality.

54. Similarly, regions pursued a systematic approach to better harness and make accessible evaluative evidence. For instance, the Regional Office for Arab States has made advances in establishing a regional evaluation SharePoint page to consolidate evaluation resources and increase evaluation use. The Asia and Pacific regional office produced a comprehensive meta-analysis report, capturing insights from evaluation reports. In addition, a series of knowledge products, region-specific meta-briefs and videos were produced by Americas and the Caribbean, East and Southern Africa, Europe and Central Asia, and West and Central Africa regions.

55. IEO partnered with the UN Coordination Division to support the UN-Women SDG Knowledge Management Advocacy project. The project aims to catalyse all knowledge on the SDGs through two components: (i) a platform where evaluation will have a dedicated tab to feature IEO's resources and products about gender-responsive evaluation and the SDGs and (ii) a Community of Practice that will send monthly updates to members, featuring news and resources on the SDGs from various parts of UN-Women, both HQ and field.

VI. United Nations system-wide coordination of gender-responsive evaluation

56. In 2017, UN-Women provided its support to system-wide coordination on gender responsive evaluation by: (i) engaging with UNEG; (ii) tracking progress on the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator; and (iii) participating in and coordinating inter-agency networks and regional evaluation groups.

A. United Nations Evaluation Group and regional United Nations evaluation groups

57. UN-Women sustained its role in UNEG by promoting the integration of gender equality and human rights dimensions into evaluation and contributing to UNEG's strategic objectives through participation in working groups. In 2017, IEO co-convened the UNEG professional peer reviews of the evaluation function of UN organizations and the Human Rights and Gender Equality Working Groups and advanced the integration of gender dimensions into the evaluation systems. During the 2017 UNEG Annual General Meeting and Evaluation Practice Exchange, IEO played a leading role in organizing the meeting and ensuring integration of gender perspective across several deliberations and workshops. IEO also has collaborated with UNEG and has been involved in the discussions on "system-wide evaluation in support of UN reform towards collective accountability and learning."

B. United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

58. In 2017, IEO provided support to UN entities by co-leading the UNEG Task Force for Gender Equality and Human Rights. Under UN-Women leadership, the task force produced: (i) a synthesis narrative of the reporting trends across UN entities; (ii) a revised technical note on the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator aligned with the next generation of UN-SWAP 2.0; and (iii) guidance on evaluating corporate gender mainstreaming. Given that the UN-SWAP 2.0 framework requires reporting on gender mainstreaming and gender equality results, this guidance will serve as a resource for UN entities wishing to undertake an evaluation of gender mainstreaming at institutional and programmatic levels.

59. Entities reporting against the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator (UN-SWAP EPI) have made good progress on integrating gender equality in evaluation. Overall scores have increased, and more entities sought external perspectives on their assessment. Of the 42 entities that reported the evaluation indicator was applicable in 2017, 26 per cent reported that they were "exceeding requirements," 50 per cent reported "meeting requirements," and 24 per cent reported "approaching requirements." Almost three-quarters of scorecard users (N=24/33) have reached this benchmark for gender responsive evaluation. For the first time, no entity has reported missing requirements.

60. The 2017 meta-evaluation of UN-Women-managed evaluations found a significant increase in performance of UN-SWAP EPI—the highest recorded performance for UN-Women since tracking of this indicator began (10.4 out of a maximum score of 12). This means that UN-Women has met the agreed deadline for reaching UN-SWAP EPI standards. The shift towards more strategic evaluations, consistent quality assurance support by regional evaluation specialists, rigorous consultant recruitment vetting, and continued capacity development initiatives contributed to the positive change.

61. To exceed the UN-SWAP EPI, however, enhancements are still needed in the methods, and prioritisation of recommendations. Systematically tackling these gaps and sustaining momentum can ensure that future evaluations will exceed the new standards of the UN-SWAP 2.0.

C. Supporting joint evaluations and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework

62. Through its regional evaluation specialists, IEO continued to be an active member in regional UN evaluation networks and platforms to promote gender-responsive evaluation.

63. In order to support greater UN system-wide coherence, UN-Women supported the integration of gender equality across UN interagency evaluation work, including in joint programmes and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluations. Within the framework of regional evaluation groups, UN-Women provided technical and advisory support to 12 UNDAF evaluations and helped manage four joint evaluations.

VII. Leveraging partnership for National Evaluation Capacity Development and Evaluation for SDGs

A. Enhancing gender responsive evaluation capacities in the framework of the SDGs

64. UN-Women continued its work in supporting gender-responsive evaluations in the context of the SDGs. Continuous efforts in improving national evaluation capacities were advanced through training, knowledge generation and exchange.

65. During 2017, UN-Women continued supporting national and regional gender-responsive evaluation capacities. Specifically, it co-leads EvalGender+, a global multi-stakeholder partnership aimed at building knowledge and capacities on gender-responsive evaluation within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. As part of its drive to reach out to a critical mass of evaluators, EvalGender+ expanded its community of practice. In 2017, membership grew to 3,123. The network served as a key platform to share good practices and lessons learned on topics related to gender and evaluation.

66. At the fifth National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) Conference organized by UNDP and other partners in Istanbul, IEO served as a speaker for a session on "Leaving no one behind: from global commitments to national experiences to set up a framework to evaluate SDGs." It also organized a pre-conference training on "Evaluating the SDGs through equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluations." Both sessions were successful in providing guidance on integrating a gender-equality approach to national evaluation systems and promoting the use of gender-responsive evaluations to inform the national reviews of SDGs.

67. UN-Women delivered training on "Evaluating the SDGs through an equity-focused and gender-responsive lens" at the 2017 African Evaluation Association conference, which drew 687 participants from 71 countries. The strand on Gender Equality and Equity Focused Evaluation observed the second highest number of accepted papers, panels, posters and workshops during the conference. Similarly, at the sixth Middle East and North Africa Evaluators Network conference, UN-Women contributed to supporting cross-regional knowledge exchange on gender-responsive evaluation in the framework of the SDGs.

68. To advance global and local action on gender-responsive evaluation and to evaluate the SDGs with a gender lens, UN-Women leveraged and played a key role during the third Global Evaluation Forum in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and the International Development Evaluation Association and the Latin-American and Caribbean Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization Network conference in Mexico. In West Africa, UN-Women supported the creation of the Association Sénégalaise d'Évaluation's working group on equity and gender- responsive evaluation. It also delivered a series of workshops to respond to the increasing demand for gender-responsive evaluation capacities.

69. These conferences and training sessions brought together over a thousand participants, representing Governments, Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators, researchers and academics, evaluation commissioners and practitioners to share evaluation approaches and experiences.

Supporting gender responsive national M&E systems in selected countries

70. Within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and under a partnership umbrella, UN-Women provided targeted technical advice and capacity development on gender-responsive evaluation to support accountability in meeting gender-equality commitments for the implementation of the SDGs.

71. During 2017, UN-Women IEO followed a twin-track approach of monitoring and evaluation support and partnership building with national governments and international agencies in Latin America, Arab States, and the Africa region. IEO supported the design and implementation of the evaluation of the national gender policy in Costa Rica; the evaluation of the National Gender Plan with the Ministry of Women in the Dominican Republic; and the development of a system of gender indicators with the Government of the City of Buenos Aires.

72. In the Arab States region, UN-Women commissioned case studies on national evaluation policies and systems in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. By documenting what exists and identifying key levers for establishing a gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation system, they provide a foundation for future work on national evaluation capacity. This was made possible with expanded collaboration and partnerships with other UN Agencies and regional bodies, including the Interagency Evaluation Network for Arab States and the regional inter-agency Peer Support Group. Consultations with stakeholders at the national level have enhanced national ownership of current and future potential work. The UN-Women office in Zimbabwe supported the government's development of gender-responsive National Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines that will operationalize the National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy.

73. In 2017, the Guidance on Evaluating the SDGs with a "No One Left Behind" lens was translated into four languages (Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish).

VIII. The 2018 Independent Evaluation Service programme of work

74. 2018 will be the first year of implementing IES's newly developed Evaluation Strategy 2018-2021, along with its Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018-2021. The five-key result areas below outline IES's programme of work with a focus on the UN reform and contribution to SDGs.

A. Implementation of effective corporate evaluations

75. In 2018, IES will present to the Executive Board the findings of two corporate evaluations on: (i) Women's Leadership and Political Participation and (ii) a meta-analysis of corporate and decentralized evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2017. IES will conduct an evaluation on Governance and National Planning that will be presented to the Executive Board in 2019. It will also initiate a corporate evaluation on UN-Women's contribution to humanitarian response and a review of UN-Women's Evaluation Policy. To determine the extent to which progress towards the objectives of UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 can be readily and reliably measured, IES will conduct an evaluability assessment of UN-Women's current Strategic Plan. Additionally, IES will continue to explore and develop innovative and gender-responsive evaluation methodologies. It will also collaborate with UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF and other UN agencies on the joint evaluation of the common chapter of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

B. Implementation of effective decentralized evaluation systems

76. IES will further strengthen its decentralized systems and practices by managing regional and country portfolio evaluations and implementing the professionalization programme. Mentorship will be emphasized to evaluation managers. In addition, IES will update its regional evaluation strategies and continue oversight and technical support of decentralized evaluations quality assurance mechanisms. These include the global evaluation oversight system, the global evaluation reports assessment and analysis system, and the roster of gender-responsive evaluators.

C. Promotion of United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation

77. IES will continue to provide leadership and actively participate in UNEG and regional United Nations evaluation groups. IES also will take part in UNEG taskforces to ensure mainstreaming of gender equality across inter-agency evaluation work. This includes helping United Nations entities on the evaluation performance indicator of the UN-SWAP through technical guidance, training and facilitating exchange among United Nations entities. Regarding the repositioning of the United Nations development system, IES will engage with UNEG to better support the envisioned system-wide evaluation mechanism proposed by the Secretary-General.

D. Strengthening national evaluation capacities for gender-responsive evaluation systems

78. IES will continue engaging in partnerships to leverage support to increase gender-responsive evaluation for SDGs. IES will support national, gender-responsive evaluation capacity development and strategically use its role as co-chair of EvalGender+ to advocate for gender-responsive national evaluation systems. Furthermore, IES will offer technical assistance at regional and national levels on conducting of gender-responsive evaluations.

E. Strengthening gender-responsive evaluation use

79. With "use of evaluation" as a new, separate key result area, IES will deepen its engagement with key internal and external stakeholders on the focus, timing and

follow-up to evaluations to enable greater ownership of recommendations and absorption of lessons. IES will invest in substantive knowledge-sharing through knowledge and learning partnerships, including the launch of a new guidance series to support learning needs.

F. Approved budget for the 2018 Independent Evaluation Service programme of work

80. The total IES budget for 2018 is $3,980,078. The budget is comprised of two funding categories: institutional budget and core programmable.

81. The institutional budget of $2,817,937 covers the salaries of 11 staff, including a Director position and two support staff of the new Independent Evaluation and Audit Services. Also covered are key activities of the work plan: company contracts for evaluation studies in 2018; office operational costs; support to decentralized evaluation systems; support to United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation; and national evaluation capacity development on gender-responsive evaluation. In addition to the institutional budget, the salaries of five regional evaluation specialists are covered through core resources of $1,162,141.

Annex I

Evaluations completed in 2017

Region	Office/division	Title of evaluation	Quality rating
West and Central Africa	Cameroon	Mainstreaming Gender into Humanitarian Response	Good
	Cameroon	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
	Cote d'Ivoire	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
	Cote d'Ivoire	Anticipating and Preventing Women and Young Girls' Vulnerability to Terrorism through Their Empowerment, Community Dialogue and Education in the Northern Part of Côte d'Ivoire	Good
	Democratic Republic of Congo	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Regional Office for West and Central Africa (Senegal)	Action Humanitaire Sensible au Genre et Aide aux Femmes et Filles Touchées par le Terrorisme de Boko Haram à Diffa - Niger	Good
East and Southern Africa	Ethiopia	Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	Good
	Kenya	Midterm Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
		Engaging Women in Preventing and Countering Extremist Violence	Good
		Integrating Gender in Peace Support Operations	Good
	Malawi	Gender-based Governance	Good
		Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Regional Office for East and Southern Africa (Kenya)	Regional Evaluation on Capacity Development initiatives during Strategic Note period	Good
	Sudan	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Tanzania	Wanawake-Wanaweza Project on Women Leadership and Political Participation	Satisfactory
	Rwanda	The National Scale Up of the ISANGE One Stop Center Model	Satisfactory
Asia and the Pacific	China	Promote Efforts for National Legislation on Domestic Violence and Upscale the Multi-sector Model in China	Good
	Papua New Guinea	Equality for Progress and Planim Save Kamap Strongpela (Plant Knowledge, Grow Strong)	Good
	Timor Leste	Institutional Strengthening for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	Good
	Vietnam	Strengthening Women's Capacity in Disaster Risk Reduction to Cope with Climate Change	Very Good

Arab States	Afghanistan	Ending Violence Against Women	Good
	Jordan	Promoting Rural Women's Food Security	Very Good
	Regional Office for Arab States (Egypt)	Thematic Evaluation of UN-Women's Humanitarian Action in the Arab States Region	Very Good
		Syrian Women Economic Empowerment Regional Project	Good
	Palestine	One Stop Shop for Sustainable Development Joint Programme	Good
		Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Morocco	Evaluation du Degré d'intégration du Genre dans Les Plans Communaux de Développement	Good
		Projet "Appui aux Femmes Semencières pour un Développement Egalitaire, Solidaire et Durable au Maroc"	Good
	Egypt (Country office)	Securing Rights and Improving Livelihoods of Women Programme	Good
		Thematic Evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to Women's Leadership and Political Participation	Very Good
Europe and Central Asia	Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (Turkey)	UN-Women's Contribution to Gender- Responsive Budgeting in Europe and Central Asia Region	Very Good
	Kyrgyzstan	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Moldova	Enhancing Women's Political Representation Through Improved Capacity and Enhanced Support	Very Good
	Moldova	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
Corporate	IEO	UN-Women Strategic Partnerships on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	Very Good
HQ Divisions	Policy Division	Preventing and Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania, Mexico and Timor Leste	Very Good
		Women's Economic Empowerment and Integration into the Value Chain of the Coca-Cola Company in Brazil, Egypt and South Africa	Good
	Programme Division	Promoting and Protecting Women Migrant Workers' Labour and Human Rights: Engaging with International, National Human Rights Mechanisms to Enhance Accountability	Good

Annex II

Evaluation in funds managed by UN-Women

A. The United Nations Trust Fund

82. The United Nations Trust Fund (UNTF) was established by the General Assembly in 1996 (resolution 50/166) and is administered by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on behalf of the United Nations system. In 2017, the Trust Fund managed 120 projects aimed at preventing and addressing violence against women and girls in 80 countries and territories.

83. In 2017, twenty-one UN Trust Fund projects implemented by grantees were externally evaluated at a cost of approximately $231,281. Budgets for final external evaluations are built into the grant awarded. Evaluation planning is managed by the grantee organization, with quality assurance and oversight provided by the UNTF. The Fund has one dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist to provide technical support to grantees in preparation and management of their project evaluations. At 91 per cent (21 out of 23 planned evaluations), the UNTF grantees' completion rate for planned evaluation is high. Only two evaluations were not completed as planned due to programmatic issues and political and institutional challenges.

84. In 2017, UNTF tracked and implemented the recommendations of the 2016 independent meta-evaluation and meta-analysis of UNTF project evaluations. This sought to enhance evaluation practice and ensure production of high-quality evaluations that generate evidence on ending violence against women. To safeguard the quality and credibility of evaluative evidence, the UNTF established rigorous processes for reviewing and checking the quality of evaluation terms of reference, inception reports and draft reports, and for increasing the budget for grantee evaluations. Twenty-three good quality project evaluations were summarized for publication on its website under the evidence hub.

85. As in previous years, to enhance the capacities of recently funded grantees in the areas of evidence-based programming and monitoring and evaluation, the UNTF convened a four-day capacity development workshop for 18 participants from nine small non-governmental organizations in New York. The workshop focused on orienting grantees to results-based planning, monitoring and evaluation of their projects. It featured training sessions for participants on how to conduct evaluation design and prepare for project evaluations.

B. Fund for Gender Equality

86. The Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) was launched in 2009. It is UN-Women's leading global grant-making mechanism and multi-donor fund dedicated to women-led civil society organization programming on women's political and economic empowerment. FGE sustains, supports and strengthens the capacities of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). CSOs implement high-impact and multi-stakeholder programmes that translate law and policy commitments into tangible services for women and girls and men and boys around the world, especially in the most excluded and marginalized communities.

87. In 2017, UN-Women's FGE commissioned its first independent evaluation to assess $64 million invested in accelerating the implementation of gender equality commitments through 121 grants to women-led CSOs across 80 countries since 2009.

The evaluation's preliminary findings show that FGE has worked directly with over 535,800 women to increase awareness and visibility of women's human rights, create stronger CSO networks for gender equality and establish local partnerships for women's empowerment. As a result, FGE is viewed by women's civil society as an important and necessary mechanism for advancing gender equality. The preliminary findings also conclude that FGE has delivered multi-dimensional, consistent and robust value-for-money throughout its lifetime. Its collaborative advantage within the United Nations system is to address inequality among CSOs to achieve the "leave no one behind" principle, thus occupying a unique niche in financing for the gender-equality universe. Its comparative advantage has been to address social norms to advance gender equality. The evaluation report will be finalized by April 2018.

88. Evaluation, a stated priority of FGE, is aimed at ensuring institutional accountability, learning and communication of results. A decentralized approach to evaluation has been developed in which grantee partners, under the guidance of FGE's staff, primarily undertake strategic evaluations, using UN-Women and UNEG standards. Only one final grantee programme evaluation was completed in 2017 (Egypt). The rest of FGE's portfolio is still active, with all programmes expected to conclude in 2018–2019.